Where children grow
Where children grow

‘Good literature gives the child a place in the world and the world a place in the child’, said Astrid Lindgren. With the exhibition Where children grow, the Swedish Institute in collaboration with the Swedish Institute for Children’s Books is hoping to establish a dialogue on the role and international distribution of children’s literature.

International exchange, ensuring that books are translated and reach readers in different parts of the world, furthers our awareness and understanding of one another.

Children’s literature is important in Sweden. Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, the world’s largest award for children’s and young adult literature is administrated by the Swedish Arts Council. Also, literature for young readers is extensively researched in Sweden. Support and assistance is provided to both researchers and an interested public by the Swedish Institute for Children’s Books, which is a national centre for children’s and young adult literature. In addition there is the Centre for the Study of Children’s Culture at Stockholm University, which organises courses, symposia and research days and publishes a series of scientific essays focusing on culture for children.

One challenge is to develop access to literature that all children can feel a part of. It is also important that children and young adults feel motivated to read. As the Convention on the Rights of the Child states, children have the right to information and the right to take part both in public life and in cultural life and the arts. We want to emphasise the importance of reading and creativity, and also make clear the pleasure and benefits to be derived from literature.

Authors, illustrators, translators, publishers, libraries and the research community all play a vital role in this connection. In the following pages we present the authors and illustrators involved in the exhibition Where children grow, and also provide contact details for the publishers and further information about the Swedish Institute for Children’s Books and ALMA.
AdBåge, Emma

Emma AdBåge made her debut at the age of 19, and she has produced a further 20-odd books and also illustrated works by other authors. Her picture books are packed with details of everyday life and the strong emotions of childhood. Leni is a little girl with a deep need to show her independence of the world in general and her dad in particular. *Leni's Olle* (Lenis Olle) won the Elsa Beskow Plaque, an illustration prize, in 2013.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Leni)

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Bergström, Gunilla
Born 1942. Author and illustrator. Trained journalist.

The books about Alfie Atkins are constantly being reprinted and reaching new readers. Since the first book, *Goodnight, Alfie Atkins* (God natt, Alfons Åberg), came out in 1972, five million Alfie books have been printed in Sweden. Not to mention all the translations into some 30 languages. Alfie has been the subject of an art history thesis, has lent his name to a children’s culture prize, and has starred in cartoon films and several plays. Gunilla Bergström has won numerous prizes, including the Astrid Lindgren Prize and the Swedish government’s Gold Medal.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Alfie Atkins)
**Digman, Kristina**

Born 1959. Illustrator and author. Studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen.

Kristina Digman first appeared as a children's book artist in Sanna Töringe’s *Our Secret Garden* (Vår hemliga trädgård). She has also illustrated Astrid Lindgren’s story *Peter and Petra* (Peter och Petra) in picture book form. The first book of her own, *Flora’s Hill* (Floras kulle), was awarded the Swedish Writers’ Union prize for the best children’s book debut of 2008. In the books about Zackarina and the Sand Wolf by Åsa Lind, her intimate little ink drawings give these philosophical tales an extra dimension.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Zackarina)

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**Eriksson, Eva**


Eva Eriksson has illustrated a string of modern classic characters such as Max, The Wild Baby and Little Sister Rabbit. She has also produced her own picture books. She draws in an affectionate, humorous style that closely reflects the texts of the authors she works with. She has been awarded several prizes, including the Elsa Beskow Plaque and the Heffaklump literary prize, and has three nominations for the prestigious August Prize.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Max)
Forslind, Ann
Born 1953. Illustrator and author. Senior lecturer of Illustration at Konstfack.

Ann Forslind has illustrated other authors’ picture book texts and published picture books of her own. Her production includes books for the very young, picture books for preschool children and three specialist books about chromatics and iconography for children and young adults. Her Baby books for the very young are about everyday life from an infant’s perspective. Ann Forslind consistently bases her simple texts and images on the young child’s thoughts and feelings. She was awarded the Elsa Beskow Plaque for illustrators in 2001.

Publishers: Alfabetabokförlag (Baby)

Gustavsson, Per
Born 1962. Illustrator and author. Studied at the School of Design and Crafts, Gothenburg.

Per Gustavsson made his debut as an author in 1995 with the picture book Stop the Ball (Stoppa bollen). The first of his Princess books, That’s What a Princess Does (Så gör prinsessor), came out in 2003. In creating this energetic and strong-willed princess, Per Gustavsson wanted to challenge traditional gender roles in a playful manner. Nine books about princesses have appeared so far and princes have also been given a number of books, with titles such as When Princes Stay Home (När prinsar stannar hemma). Per Gustavsson was awarded the Elsa Beskow Plaque for illustrators in 2014.

Publishers: Natur & Kultur (Princes and Princesses)
Landström, Lena

Born 1943. Illustrator and author.
Studied at the Beckmans College of Design.

Lena Landström has produced many books in collaboration with her husband, Olof Landström. Together they created well-known picture book characters such as Will and Boo and Baa. Their books about Pom and Pim are directed at the very youngest. Using words sparingly, Lena Landström takes a sensitive look at the young child’s thoughts and feelings. The Landströms have been jointly awarded the Astrid Lindgren Prize and the Heffaklump literary award.

Lena Landström has also illustrated picture book texts of her own as well as the work of other authors.

Publishers: Lilla piratförlaget (Pom and Pim)

Landström, Olof

Born 1943. Author and illustrator. Studied advertising and the graphic trade at Konstfack.

Olof Landström has collaborated with a number of authors, especially his wife, Lena Landström. His long experience of film animation is evident in many of his books. The Pom and Pim books for the very young feature scenes with a film-like structure. The pictures contain few details, the key elements being Pom’s body language and facial expression, which clearly reflect the character’s changing emotions. The Landströms have been jointly awarded both the Astrid Lindgren Prize and the Heffaklump literary award.

Publishers: Lilla piratförlaget (Pom and Pim)
**Lind, Åsa**

Born 1958. Author. Trained at Nyckelviksskolan, and at the Stockholm School of Journalism.

Åsa Lind wrote more than 200 children’s stories for radio before making her debut as a book author in 1995. She has since written more than 20 books for young readers. She is best known for her read-aloud books which contain philosophical and poetic tales about an inventive girl, Zackarina, and her friend the wolf. The first book in the series was awarded the Nils Holgersson Plaque when it came out in 2003 and the sequel, *More of the Sand Wolf* (Mera Sandvargen), was nominated for the prestigious August Prize. Her books have been translated into 15 languages.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Zackarina)

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**Lindenbaum, Pija**


Pija Lindenbaum illustrated other authors’ books for some years before publishing her own book *Else-Marie and her Seven Little Daddies* (Else-Marie och småpapporna) in 1990. Her books are rich in her own special brand of humour and often star independent girls. One such character is Bridget, who is both sure of herself and chary. *Bridget and the Grey Wolves* (Gittan och gråvargarna) won the August Prize in 2000. Her books for the very young about Micke and Manne centre on the small happenings of everyday life. Besides a string of Swedish literary awards, Pija Lindenbaum has won the German award Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis. Her books have been translated into a number of languages.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Bridget), Bonnier Carlsen (Micke and Manne)
Lindgren, Astrid
1907–2002. Author and publisher’s editor.

Easily the best known and most widely translated Swedish author. Her books have appeared in translation, in a total of 90 languages. *Pippi Longstocking* (Pippi Långstrump) was her second book and marked her breakthrough. Astrid Lindgren has written fairy tales, realistic stories and fantasy novels for readers of different ages. She fought all her life for the right of children and has been awarded innumerable prizes and several honorary doctorates. A number of prizes have been established in her name, the best-known being the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, initiated by the Swedish government upon her death in 2002.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Pippi Longstocking)

Lindgren, Barbro

Born 1937. Author. Studied commercial art at Konstfack and trained at the Swedish Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

Barbro Lindgren has written over 100 books, mainly for children. She illustrated her early books herself but since the 1980s has collaborated with a variety of illustrators. In the books about Max, it is Eva Eriksson who has illustrated the extremely brief text. She writes in a humorous style with absurd elements and is not afraid of tackling difficult subjects such as death and loneliness. She possesses a striking ability to see the world through a child’s eyes. Barbro Lindgren has been awarded numerous prizes and honours. She was the first Swedish author to receive the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, in 2014.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Max)
Lundberg, Sara
Trained in the US and Sweden.

After having illustrated a number of books by different authors, Sara Lundberg made her debut in 2009 with her own White Lines (Vita streck). Her emotionally powerful images in bold colour combinations contrast tellingly with the poetic narrative. The sequel, White Lines and Windsor (Vita streck och Öjvind), was nominated for the August Prize and for the Nordic Council Children and Young People’s Literature Prize. The third book, Windsor and the End of the World (Öjvind och världens ände), brought her the Heffaklump literary prize in 2013. Sara Lundberg also illustrated the inspirational book Write Over and Over Again (Skriv om och om igen), which won the 2009 August Prize.

Publishers: Alfabeta bokförlag (Vita and Windsor)

Nordqvist, Sven
Born 1946. Illustrator and author.
Trained architect.

Sven Nordqvist worked as an advertising artist and illustrated school books before winning a picture book competition in 1983 with Agaton Öman och alfabetet (Agaton Öman and the alphabet), a book that takes young readers through the alphabet. His breakthrough came in 1984 with Pancakes for Findus (Pannkakstårtan), the first book about old man Pettson and his cat, Findus. The illustrations are rich in amusing details that are never remarked upon in the text. Small figures that the author calls ‘muckles’ are up to all kinds of tricks in the pictures’ margins. In 2007, he was awarded the August Prize for Where is My Sister? (Var är min syster?).

Publishers: Opal (Findus)
Nyman, Ingrid Vang

Ingrid Vang Nyman is known first and foremost for her illustration of the books about Pippi Longstocking. She also illustrated a number of other books by Astrid Lindgren and some works of her own. Ingrid Vang Nyman was an innovative artist from Denmark who brought modernism into the world of children’s books. Many contemporary illustrators mention her as a source of inspiration. Her image of Pippi became firmly imprinted on the minds of Swedish readers. In many of the translations, the books have been illustrated by foreign colleagues.

Publishers: Rabén & Sjögren Agency (Pippi Longstocking)

Stark, Ulf
Born 1944. Author.

Ulf Stark has written books for children and young adults, picture-books and film scripts. He has a unique ability to mix comic and serious elements in his stories. Death and grief are recurring themes, even in his books for young children, as is friendship. In *A Star Called Alex* (En stjärna vid namn Alex) and *The Sister from the Sea* (Systern från havet), Stina Wirsén was responsible for the illustrations. Both books are about grief and friendship. Ulf Stark was awarded the 1996 August Prize for *My Sister is an Angel* (Min syster är en ängel). Other literary prizes include the Heffaklump, the Nils Holgersson Plaque and the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis.

Publishers: Bonnier Carlsen (Johan and Ajax, Sirkka and Margareta)
**Widmark, Martin**


Martin Widmark’s more than 20 books about the Whodunit Detective Agency top the Swedish library lending list year after year. They have been translated into 30-odd languages. The book series about monster agent Nelly Rapp are also highly popular. Martin Widmark is always seeking to boost children’s love of reading and has mastered the art of writing stories that are both accessible and exciting. Together with Junibacken, a fantasy play house in Stockholm, he launched a project in 2012 entitled ‘A Reading Class’. In 2014 he was awarded the Swedish government’s Gold Medal for his ‘excellent authorship and inspiring efforts to promote reading among children and young people’.

Publishers: Bonnier Carlsen (JerryMaya)

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**Willis, Helena**


Helena Willis illustrates Martin Widmark’s books about the Whodunit Detective Agency. Her drawings are on every page and contribute to the books’ special character. Helena Willis has also written picture books of her own set in a kind of Wild West environment, about an inquisitive cowgirl called Olga and her talking horse. _Olga Throws a Lasso_ (Olga kastar lasso) was the runner-up in a 2007 competition organised by the Association of Swedish Illustrators and Designers. The illustrations in a comic, gawky style contain many fanciful small details.

Publishers: Bonnier Carlsen (JerryMaya)
Wirsén, Stina


Stina Wirsén worked as an editorial cartoonist before becoming a full-time book illustrator and author. She has published several series of books for the very young, such as the Who books and the books about Brokiga, and has also illustrated texts by other writers. Together with Ulf Stark she created A Star Called Ajax (En stjärna vid namn Ajax) and The Sister from the Sea (Systern från havet), two emotionally powerful books of differing character about grief and friendship. Her drawings in ink and watercolours give The Sister from the Sea a concrete feel, while A Star Called Ajax is illustrated in a more poetic way. Stina Wirsén has been awarded the Elsa Beskow Plaque for illustrators and the Heffaklump literary prize.

Publishers: Bonnier Carlsen (Johan and Ajax, Sirkka and Margareta)
A new generation

A new generation of creators are beginning to make a name for themselves in Swedish children’s literature. They are writers and illustrators – sometimes one and the same person – who are innovative in their choice of theme but also foremost in their artistry.

Many of them have a solid education in graphic design and illustration. They are highly trained picture-book artists who illustrate their own or one another’s texts or those of others. A mark of their work is an aware, inventive imagery and extensive integration of words and pictures.

They strive to be inclusive in their storytelling and to reflect the cultural diversity that is a distinguishing feature of contemporary Swedish society. While many of the books are published by small firms, they have attracted attention and won prizes. There are any number of interesting writers and illustrators at work today and we have chosen to present a selection of them.

A model and source of inspiration for many new picture-book artists is Eva Lindström, who has produced a raft of singular, unconventional works. Together with first-time author Ellen Karlsson she was awarded one of Sweden’s foremost literary prizes, the August Prize, in 2013 for the read-aloud book *String, the Bird and Me* (Snöret, fågeln och jag, Hippo Bokförlag). Death and grief are the subjects of Siri Ahmed Backström and Karin Saler’s picture book *Those Left Behind* (Dom som är kvar, Urax förlag).

Emma Virke’s picture book *Letter to the Moon* (Brevet till månen, Alvina förlag & produktion AB) is about a little girl, Moa, who is worried that the moon seems so lonely. Free imagination is also important in *The Lightning Gobbler* (Blixtslukaren, Natur & Kultur), written by Jonatan Brännström with illustrations by Joanna Hellgren.
The Swedish Institute for Children’s Books is a national information centre for anyone with an interest in literature for children and young adults. The aims of the institute include promoting the study of and research on children’s literature at all levels and furthering the knowledge and understanding of children’s literature among those working with this age group. The institute’s public research library collects and makes accessible all literature for children and young adults published in Sweden, as well as Swedish and international theoretical literature.

The institute also publishes the only Swedish academic journal on children’s literature, ‘Barnboken – Journal of Children’s Literature Research’, funded by the Swedish Research Council. ‘Barnboken’ is published as an electronic open access journal (www.barnboken.net).

In a special publication series the institute also publishes new Swedish research. Currently, the institute is in the process of editing an extensive history of Swedish children’s literature.

The Swedish Institute for Children’s Books was founded in 1965 and is financed by the Ministry of Education and the City of Stockholm.

www.sbi.kb.se

The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA) is the world’s largest award for children’s and young adult literature. The award is given annually to a single laureate or to several. Authors, illustrators, oral storytellers and reading promoters are eligible for the award, which is designed to promote interest in children’s and young adult literature. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of our work. An expert jury selects the laureate(s) from candidates nominated by institutions and organisations all over the world. The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award was founded by the Swedish government in 2002 and is administrated by the Swedish Arts Council.

All countries are invited to nominate in order to promote their literature for young readers and to stimulate reading promotion. Nominating bodies can be international, national or regional organisations such as research institutes, children’s book institutes, author and illustrator organisations, children’s departments and literary centres at national libraries. The Award Office is pleased to receive new proposals for qualified nominators.

www.alma.se/en
Book publishers
- list of contacts

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