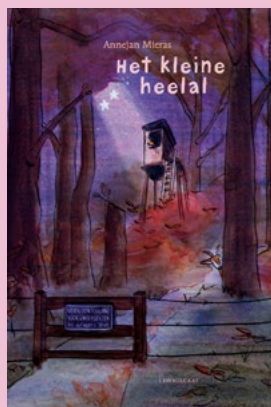


4 Dutch Children's Books



to Make You Think

The Dutch Foundation For Literature invests in the quality and diversity of literature through grants for writers, translators, publishers and festivals, and contributes to the production and distribution of Dutch literature at home and abroad.

We highly recommend these four new Dutch children's books for ages 10 and up, and we'd be happy to help out with translation costs. There are lots of other outstanding and thought-provoking Dutch children's books that we'd love to talk to you about too. Please visit our website www.letterenfonds.nl or contact Agnes Vogt, a.vogt@letterenfonds.nl

Yorick Goldewijk *Duizend & ik* / *Thousand & I* (ill.) Yvonne Lacet



Science fiction or reality?

From the very first page of this book, you can tell that there is something unusual about the protagonist, who, according to the computerised voice that comes through a speaker in the wall above her bed, is called Eight. But what is going on? Who is this girl who lives in the skyscraper city of Surdus, surrounded by 'the Wall', with the sea beyond, who travels with her fellow citizens every morning to 'the Terminal', where she sits all day at a screen, answering apparently meaningless questions to avoid 'termination'? Who is this girl, who, from the moment on the train when she looks straight into Thousand's eyes, is determined to go with her to see the sea?

Subtly playing with the ambiguity of his fictional world, Goldewijk sends the reader down some very interesting paths. Does Thousand really exist? Or did Eight just see her own reflection in the window of the train carriage? Does Thousand represent her desire for freedom and intimacy, for what makes us human? 'Where am I? What am I?', Eight asks herself.

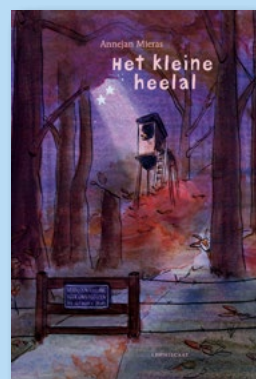
Goldewijk writes in a vivid, evocative style and, coupled with Yvonne Lacet's

illustrations, this creates a claustrophobic atmosphere that inexorably draws the reader in. The big reveal takes a while to come, which only serves to ratchet up the tension of this immersive reading experience. This is a book that is both currently relevant and full of suspense.

Yorick Goldewijk won the Gouden Griffel for the best children's book of the year 2022 for *Films die nergens draaien* (Movies Showing Nowhere), a bold and imaginative story that also transcends time and space.

Pages 175 / Publisher **Ploegsma** / Contact **Sophie Mulder** / sophie.mulder@wpgmedia.nl

Annejan Mieras *Het kleine heelal* / *The Little Universe* (ill.) Evelien Jagtman



An original adventure story about a strong-minded ten-year-old.

Raaf's life is falling apart. Not only have she and her mum suddenly had to move to a dingy caravan on the 'Little Universe' campsite, she's also been suspended from school. Raaf is worried. And where

is her dad? According to Raaf's tight-lipped mum, he's having 'holdups' at the tow-truck job for which he was recently recruited by a shady character. Raaf doesn't believe a word of it.

Mieras skilfully makes the undercurrent of tension between the mother and the daughter palpable. She vividly portrays the dreary campsite, which resembles 'a ghost town', depicting it cinematically as a little universe in its own right. It turns out that Raaf isn't the only one at the campsite who's feeling lost and lonely. Nicolaas, the campsite manager's grumpy son, is struggling with his own loss. He sits in his hidden treehouse, staring through his telescope into the infinite universe – clinging to his mum's maxim that 'the sun in the middle holds everything together' – in an attempt to understand how things are interconnected: 'I didn't know I could think that far.'

Mieras beautifully makes the emptiness of the universe that Nicolaas talks about converge with 'the hollow feeling' that's troubling Raaf, and a friendship grows between the two of them. Meanwhile, little by little, between the lines of sparkling, humorous dialogue, she reveals the secrets of both Raaf's dad and Nicolaas in a story that builds to a surprising and powerful conclusion.

Het kleine heelal is the third book written by **Annejan Mieras**, following *Portiek Zeezicht* (2018) and the award-winning *Homme en het noodgeval* (2019). Mieras is highly regarded for her light and confident narrative voice and her realistic young characters.

Pages 205 / Publisher **Lemniscat** / Contact **Robin van der Gaag** / robin@lemniscat.nl

4 DUTCH CHILDREN'S BOOKS
TO MAKE YOU THINK

Koos Meinderts *Zebedeus en het ganzenbord van Wisse* / *Zebedeus and the Game of Goose* (ill.) Annette Fienieg



A playful and poetic metaphor for life.

Koos Meinderts is not a writer of absolute truths, preferring instead to support the right to daydream. The humble bear Zebedeus is a perfect example of a Meinderts character. Zebedeus hesitates, wavers, hums and haws. One day, he receives a surprise in the post, a parcel containing a board game, the Game of Goose. 'You can't win, but you can't lose either. All you can do is play,' says Wisse, the mysterious sender, in his accompanying letter. The game is a metaphor for life and Zebedeus plays it as well as he can. Along the way, he has philosophical conversations with the characters he meets – conversations about freedom and choosing your own path, about longing for home and longing for faraway.

The language Meinderts uses is carefully chosen and amusing in an understated way. However, a veil of melancholy

hangs over the story, as there's an inevitability to Zebedeus's adventures. The enigmatic Wisse represents the only certainty in life.

Like Meinderts, the illustrator Annette Fienieg applies a gentle touch to her creations. In her warm mixed-media paintings, we see Zebedeus with his red backpack heading towards that unavoidable, final certainty, full of wonder, but without fear.

Koos Meinderts celebrates his fortieth year as a writer in 2023. Nearly all of his books have been illustrated by his wife, Annette Fienieg.

Pages **160** / Publisher **Hoogland & Van Klaveren** / Contact **Elami, Elaine Michon** / elaine@elami-agency.com

In *Dát bedoel ik, zei de zalm* (That's What I Mean, Said the Salmon), Joke van Leeuwen's characters muse about their own worth and vulnerability.

This novella, also illustrated by the author, is told as a relay story, with one character passing on the narrative to another. A piece of fluff is carried by the wind and ends up in the ear of a sportswoman who is just lifting a heavy trophy above her head. As the champion reaches up to scratch her ear, the trophy tumbles into a river, where it starts talking to a passing salmon. Who then gets into a conversation with a grain of sand, and so on. The perspective constantly shifts and so, for a moment, the reader looks through the eyes of someone or something else. Person, animal, plant or object, Van Leeuwen gives them all believable voices with which they often express surprisingly deep thoughts.

Shifting perspectives – that's what Joke van Leeuwen has excelled in throughout her entire oeuvre. Presenting the world in a slightly different way and creating space for wonder. This small story, full of meandering thoughts and off-beat exchanges, offers that same sense of wonder. As in, for example, the insight that even the puniest grain of sand is of value – if only in the eyes of the grain of sand itself.

Joke van Leeuwen has won the Gouden Griffel, two Gouden Penneel awards, 13 Zilveren Griffels, two Zilveren Penneel awards, two Woutertje Pieterse Prizes, and the Theo Thijssen Prize for her whole oeuvre.

Pages **92** / Publisher **Querido** /
Contact **Lucienne van der Leije** /
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Joke van Leeuwen *Dát bedoel ik, zei de zalm* / *That's What I Mean, Said the Salmon*



A story that makes you see the world in a slightly different way and creates space for wonder.