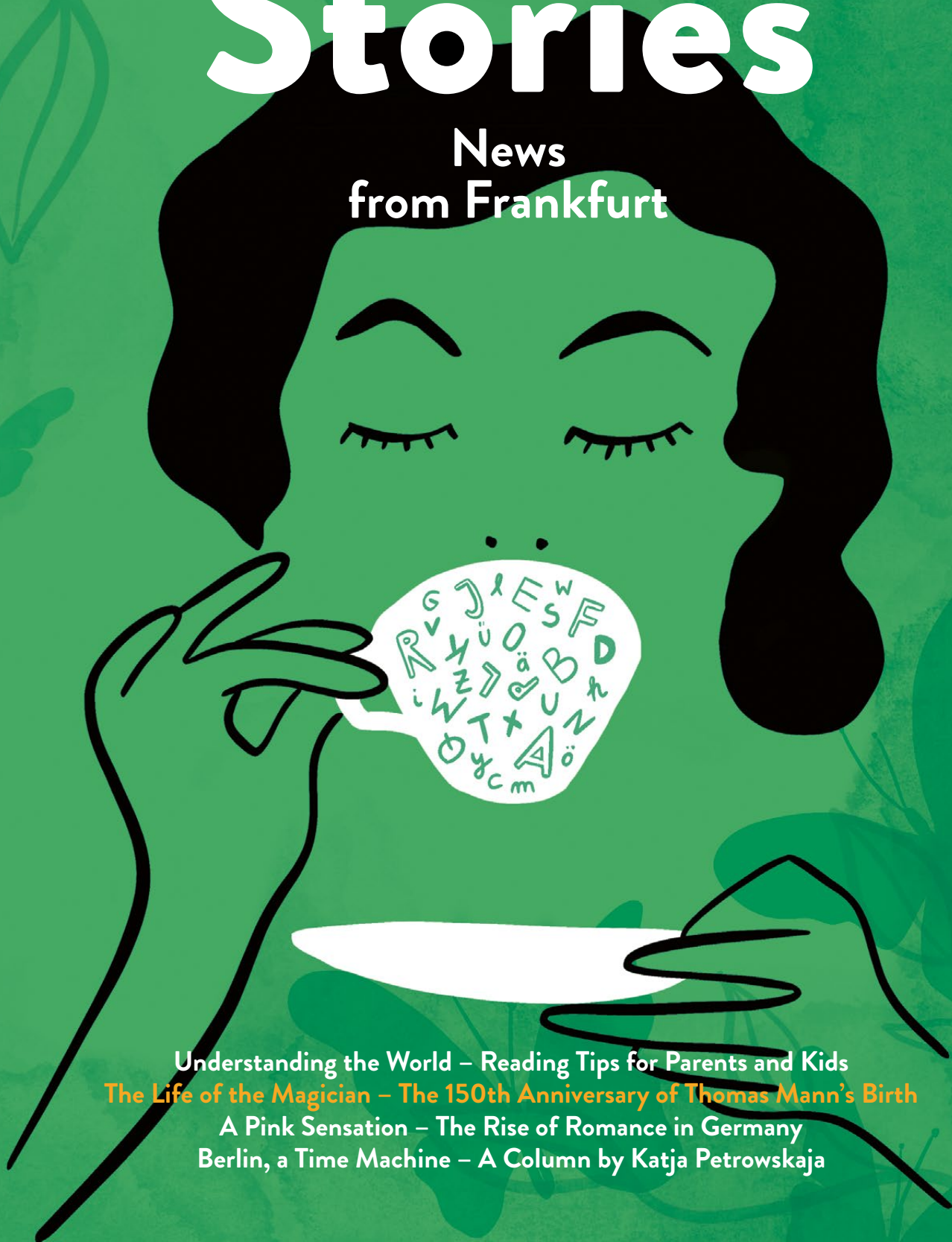


German Stories

News
from Frankfurt



Understanding the World – Reading Tips for Parents and Kids

The Life of the Magician – The 150th Anniversary of Thomas Mann's Birth

A Pink Sensation – The Rise of Romance in Germany

Berlin, a Time Machine – A Column by Katja Petrowskaja

BEST OF FRANKFURT 2024



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1 For the first time, an entire hall level was dedicated to the New Adult genre | 2 Bestselling historian and journalist Anne Applebaum received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade | 3 South Sudanese writer and activist Stella Gaitano joined the cultural-political 'Frankfurt Calling' programme | 4 Martina Hefter, 2024 German Book Prize winner, was a popular guest | 5 Literature as 'an act of hope': British-Turkish author Elif Shafak spoke at the opening press conference alongside Juergen Boos (Director Frankfurter Buchmesse) and Karin Schmidt-Friderichs (chair of the Börsenverein) | 6 The 'GuestScroll' was handed over to the Philippines, Guest of Honour 2025, represented by Ambassador Irene Susan B. Natividad | 7 Guest of Honour Italy turned The Forum into a lively piazza for events | 8 At the German TikTok Book Awards, author and jury member Sebastian Fitzek honoured the Creator of the Year, Jess Hengel | 9 Is a system overhaul the only way to a future worth living in? Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari and Japanese philosopher Kohei Saito filled Room Harmonie | 10 Deniz Yücel (journalist, PEN Berlin) and Roberto Saviano (author and journalist) discussed 'The Other Italy - Writing in Illiberal Times 2024' | 11 Bestselling author Chloe Gong signed her fantasy novel 'Immortal Longings' | 12 Axel Scheffler presented his donkey penguin Ponti Pento | 13 German musician Peter Maffay signed a new photo book celebrating his career in rock'n'roll | 14 Crowds at the signing tents: literature enthusiasts came in search of autographs | 15 The German Youth Literature Prize for the best children's book went to Regina Kehn (l) and Saša Stanišić (m). The trophy was presented by Federal Minister Lisa Paus (r)

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

‘Everywhere in the world where we once took democracy for granted, it is now in doubt.’ Who do you think wrote this? At first, I thought it must be a quote from an editorial written about recent developments. But I was almost nine decades out. Thomas Mann wrote this sentence shortly before Hitler invaded Poland. In this 2025 issue of *German Stories*, Sascha Michel looks at Germany’s most famous writer of the 20th century and his relevance today. Michel, who edits classic literature at S. Fischer, recommends that we re-read Mann’s greatest novel, *The Magic Mountain*, to better understand the heightened ‘irritability’ of the present day.

It may be due to the excessive strains of the current age that fiction – the offering of ‘otherworlds’ – is enjoying such great success, particularly among young readers. When we set up a hall in Frankfurt last autumn dedicated to *New Adult* literature and related genres, we knew what would happen. Young readers flocked to get tickets, and we had to put up ‘sold out’ signs early on the Saturday morning. Right now, reading – and books as physical objects – are helping young people to express their identities; *shelfies* have become a worldwide phenomenon. Jenny Horst, a bookseller and genre author who is delighted by this

development, looks back at Frankfurt’s sensation in pink, bewitched by the behemoth that is #BookTok. And I can promise you, that was only the beginning ...

In this issue, you will find more tips for parents and children from Christine Paxmann, publisher of *Eselsohr*, the trade magazine for youth-oriented media. This time, she focuses on non-fiction. There is an article about the German Non-Fiction Prize and a page dedicated to the Philippines, our 2025 Guest of Honour. Colin Hauer, CEO of the German audiobook publisher Hörbuch Hamburg, talks about upcoming audio trends. We also provide comprehensive details of our funding programmes.

Make sure you don’t miss ‘What I Always Wanted to Say About Germany’, which concludes this issue. In her column, Katja Petrowskaja recalls her arrival in 1990s Berlin, a city ‘in which consensus prevailed on war and peace and everything changed for the better’. A city in which ‘you stayed young, created art and were never too late’. Sometimes, memories of yesterday inspire goals for tomorrow. My goal for this year is to welcome you all to Frankfurt again in October.

Until then, take care! Yours, Juergen Boos



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Juergen Boos
Director Frankfurter
Buchmesse

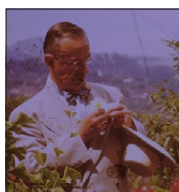


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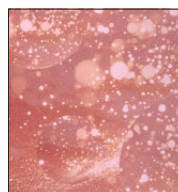
Moni Port
is a Frankfurt-based
illustrator and author
of numerous books.
Find out more at
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The Imagination Peoples the Air

‘To be the Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse is many things – among them an overdue reintroduction of the Philippines to audiences that may not have had the opportunity to understand it beyond its ties to cultures that have historically been more dominant. We are producing stories from over 7,600 islands and over a hundred languages; a relatively young literary market, but with the kind of diversity that can potentially offer that rare thing in contemporary literature: familiar but truly original.

Our Guest of Honour presentation will reintroduce the Philippine market as one worth investing in, claim our stories’ space as vital contributions to world literature, and position the Philippines as an emerging player in the global creative economy.’

Charisse Aquino-Tugade is the Executive Director of the National Book Development Board (NBDB) and currently serves as a Co-Director of the Philippines as Guest of Honour at the 2025 Frankfurter Buchmesse



After the ceremonial handover of the GuestScroll. From left: Marie Yvette L. Banzon Abalos, Ani Rosa Almario, Nida Ramirez, Khavn De La Cruz, Charisse Aquino-Tugade, Aurea B. Lopez, H.E. Irene Susan B. Natividad, Maria Karina A. Bolasco, Patrick D. Flores, Neni Sta. Romana-Cruz, Dante Francis Ang II, Kristian Sendon Cordero, Dominador D. Buhain.

This year’s Frankfurter Buchmesse Guest of Honour celebrates the strength of its diversity. Its programme recognises some of the country’s most important artists, the traditions of its indigenous communities, global perspectives, and the writer and national hero José Rizal.

Rizal had a special relationship with Germany, and in the late 19th century he lived for a time in Heidelberg and Berlin. His novel *Noli Me Tangere*, which appeared with a Berlin publishing house, is now regarded as a key work of Filipino literature and of the independence movement against Spanish colonial rule. The motto of the Philippines’ appearance as Guest of Honour – ‘The imagination peoples the air’ – is inspired by this novel, and alludes to the country’s vibrant literature and history.

With over 70 publishers, artists and authors writing in various genres, the Guest of Honour for 2025 presents a rich selection of Filipino literature and culture. This year readers can also look forward to over 50 new releases in Filipino fiction and non-fiction. Patrick D. Flores, the curator of the Philippines’ Guest of Honour pavilion, says: ‘The literature of the Philippines is democratic and bold, and inspires us to see the world anew through stories.’

AUDIO ON THE RISE

LISTENING IS THE NEW READING

The global audiobook market has experienced astonishing growth over the past 15 years and is now worth almost seven billion dollars a year worldwide. In the first half of 2024, the German-language audiobook market alone grew by 6% compared to the previous year. At Frankfurter Buchmesse, the meeting point for audiobook publishers, authors, narrators and fans is the Frankfurt Audio area, which almost doubled in size in 2024 compared to 2023. We talked with Colin Hauer, CEO of the German audiobook publisher Hörbuch Hamburg, about what makes a good audiobook and about upcoming audio trends.

Colin, congratulations, several audio productions by Hörbuch Hamburg and its imprints have been nominated for the German Audiobook Award 2025. What characterizes a good audiobook?

Thank you! We are very proud to be on the longlist with six titles and to be recognised for the quality of our productions.

Good audiobooks add an important dimension to texts. The vocal interpretation of a text makes emotions and atmosphere audible and tangible. Emphasis, intonation and the use of targeted pauses enhance the effect of a story: a true art form that inspires.

What audio trends and developments do you see for 2025?

I am positive about the future of audiobooks for this year. It is no secret that the growth is taking place in the digital business, while sales of physical audio productions continue to decline. Our diverse publishing and retail landscape remains dynamic and therefore exciting – surprise successes and innovations are inevitable.

Genres that are currently very popular – such as the broad field of romantasy – will continue to influence trends on the market. But there is always room for something new.

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At the fair's Frankfurt Audio area 2024.

© Hörbuch Hamburg



Special projects that take the importance of listening to a new level will certainly be exciting. For example, combining the audiobook medium with topics such as mindfulness, meditation or cognitive development. Our listeners and their requests on social media platforms such as TikTok are an additional source of inspiration for us, which we try to incorporate into our strategy. One example of this is duet readings, which we will be testing in the future.

The use of AI-generated voices has been much debated. What possible applications do you see?

AI is currently not technically capable of keeping up with the quality of trained narrators. Audiobook narration is a profession, a vocation and an art that we value enormously. The feedback from the audience is also very clear – they enjoy the human voice today just as much as they did thousands of years ago. We see potential for the use of AI in other areas, such as supporting our human creativity and optimising administrative and technical processes. This leaves more time and energy for the more exciting part of our business.

Thank you for the interview!



Colin Hauer has been active in the audio world for over 18 years. He held positions at Amazon, Bastei Lübbe, Bookwire, Sony Music and Universal Music.

Interview by
Ines Bachor



MARKING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THOMAS MANN'S BIRTH

THE LIFE OF THE MAGICIAN

Thomas Mann, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929, was one of the most important writers of the last century. It was thanks to him that the modern German novel achieved the status of world literature. His multifaceted oeuvre has enjoyed a positive reception that is almost unrivalled anywhere in the world.

On 28 December 1949 a young student visits the world-famous author Thomas Mann at his villa in Pacific Palisades in California. The student is sixteen-year-old Susan Sontag, for whom Thomas Mann is no less than a 'god'. But her meeting with this 'god' turns out to be a huge disappointment: over tea and biscuits in his study, it dawns on her (as far as she can make out, overcome as she is with excitement and embarrassment) that all the illustrious author seems to want to do is make pronouncements about his own work. Not for a moment does the Nobel Prize winner break character – he is the Great Twentieth-Century Author personified.

'ALL OF EUROPE FELL INTO MY HEAD'

Even at this point, in 1949, *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924) was the most admired of all Thomas Mann's works in America. In her speech at the 2003 award ceremony for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, Susan Sontag said that no other book had been as important in her life.

In 2024, which marked the novel's 100-year anniversary, *Der Zauberberg* – now translated into 33 languages – was celebrated worldwide as one of the most important works of the 20th century. The publisher S. Fischer, Thomas Mann's literary home ever since his début *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* (*Little Herr Friedemann*, 1898) and the epic family saga *Buddenbrooks* (1901), brought out a beautiful luxury edition of *Der Zauberberg*: its cover is a glittering white, like the snow which plays such an important part in the novel.

'All of Europe fell into my head,' wrote Susan Sontag of her first thrilling experience reading *Der Zauberberg*. She was referring to the 'confusion' of ideologies and world views that collide irreconcilably at the sanatorium in Davos, high in the Swiss Alps, where the novel is set just before the outbreak of the First World War. The novel goes on to address the great 'irritability' of mankind – and it is precisely this irritability, this readiness to resort to violence, that feels so familiar to us a hundred years on.

There is much that feels familiar, in fact, upon re-reading and rediscovering Thomas Mann 150 years after his birth. Internationally he is probably the most popular, widely read author in the canon of literary modernism aside from Franz Kafka – but in Thomas Mann's case, this is not because he is timeless but because of the astonishing topicality of his texts and his life story. Behind what Alfred



[german-stories.de/
magic-mountain](https://german-stories.de/magic-mountain)

More information
about the featured
book collection
can be found here.



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'I was aware of the silence that reigned in the house, an intense silence, scrupulously observed by everyone, the likes of which I had never experienced before'. Susan Sontag



© ETH Library, Zürich, Thomas Mann Archive. Photographer: Georg Pottendorfer, Munich.

The magician's family: Katja Mann and the six children (1919).
From left: Monika, Golo, Michael, Katja, Klaus, Elisabeth, Erika.



A very special family portrait: this film about the life of the Mann family, first broadcast in 2001, has won numerous awards. Written and directed by Heinrich Breloer. Thomas Mann was played by Armin Mueller-Stahl.

Döblin once mockingly called Thomas Mann's 'prose of ironed-in creases' – behind all that is highbrow and bourgeois, the product of an educated middle-class milieu – what we see in Thomas Mann's work now more than ever is the brittle, the uncertain, the uneasy and the surprisingly political.

Nowadays, of course, Thomas Mann's homosexuality is no longer a cause for scandal, but it can inform our approach to his work, prompting us to read many of his texts in a new and different light. Likewise, we have always known that Thomas Mann's mother Julia da Silva-Bruhns moved to Lübeck from Brazil – but it is only now that we are starting to tell her story too, and to realise how important her migrant background was to Thomas Mann's life and work. The fact that this well-read and erudite author dropped out of school and was a 'failed grammar school student' is also well-known, and often referenced by Thomas Mann himself; but this aspect of his youth and his time in Lübeck makes him accessible and sympathetic

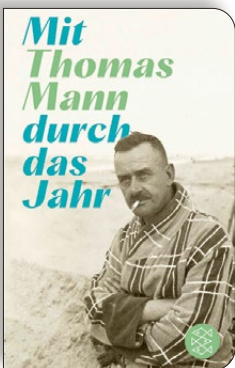
to a modern audience, and from the outset it gives an ironic twist to the stylisation so typical of Mann's work.

Above all, however, it is the publication of Thomas Mann's diaries – which began in 1977 and formed the basis of the successful Twitter account 'Thomas Mann Daily' and of the recently published volume *Mit Thomas Mann durch das Jahr* – that has helped us to see, in all of Thomas Mann's self-portrayals, elements of the ridiculous, the staged, the fragile. It is no coincidence that his last great novel, *Felix Krull* (1954), is about a con man. Moreover: just as Hans Castorp, the rather average hero of *Der Zauberberg*, could be a good

WIDELY READ IN THE CANON OF LITERARY MODERNISM

role model for our times because he does not take everything as deadly seriously as all the alpha males of this world, so Thomas Mann's humour, his ability to laugh at himself and his own bourgeois class, could be a healing remedy to the resentments and bitternesses of the present day. The literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, one of Thomas Mann's greatest admirers, often pointed out that Thomas Mann's work was not only about grand, cryptic stories but also about fun and entertainment.

The main impetus behind the rediscovery of Thomas Mann and his relevance to our own time, however, is undoubtedly his political biography.



Mit Thomas Mann durch das Jahr
(Fischer Taschenbuch)
A selection of the most beautiful quotes from all volumes of the diaries.



Hans Wisskirchen
Zeit der Magier
(S. Fischer)
The great political biography of the Mann brothers and their relationship with democracy.



Kai Sina
Was gut ist und was böse
(Propyläen)
On the political activist Thomas Mann, who passionately argued that it is everyone's responsibility to make politics their own.

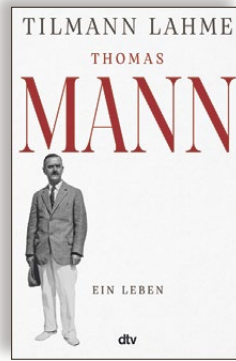
Golo Mann has left us with an image of Thomas and Heinrich Mann as ‘ignorant magicians’ who knew how to tell a good story but who ultimately knew nothing about politics. It is precisely this image that is now being called into question. Hans Wißkirchen, for example, in his book *Zeit der Magier*, illustrates the exact opposite: he shows

HUMOUR AS A HEALING REMEDY TO RESENTMENT AND BITTERNESS

that Heinrich and Thomas Mann repeatedly adopted very clear political positions, and that they also – despite all their conflicts – engaged in a productive dialogue about political issues throughout their lives. It is no coincidence that in his book, *Was gut ist und was böse*, literary scholar Kai Sina gives the first in-depth account of Thomas Mann as a political activist, one who not only publicly supported the Weimar Republic from 1922 onwards and who, in exile – particularly in his legendary radio addresses to the ‘German Listeners!’ – agitated tirelessly against Hitler, but who also campaigned for the creation of the state of Israel as a home for survivors of the Holocaust. In the impressive new double volume of the *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe* edited by Friedhelm Marx, which focuses on Thomas Mann’s essays and journalism between 1926 and 1933, we learn how, for Thomas Mann, politics was inextricably linked with his own writing, and how bold and risky was his support for democracy in the later years of the Weimar Republic.

‘Everywhere in the world where we once took democracy for granted, it is now in doubt,’ wrote Thomas Mann in 1938, a year before Germany invaded Poland. What we have in common with Thomas Mann is precisely this sense of a departure from normality, this unsettling loss of what we had thought was a natural status quo. But he can also teach us that such a loss is not inevitable, and that we must fight the enemies of democracy with everything in our power.

On 6 June 2025, the 150th anniversary of Thomas Mann’s birth will be celebrated around the world. His lifelong publisher, S. Fischer, is bringing



Tilman Lahme
Thomas Mann
(dtv)
Thomas Mann and his life, told, described and explained in a fascinating way with new sources.



Thomas Mann
Essays 1926–1933
(S. Fischer)
Mann’s essays from the late years of the Weimar Republic edited and annotated in full for the first time. Text and commentary in a box set.

out an extensive and wide-ranging anniversary programme with its own catalogue. And many other publishing houses are also releasing important new books about Thomas Mann. With the exception of Tilman Lahme’s major Thomas Mann biography (and Dieter Borchmeyer’s major monograph, which was published in 2023), these books do not look at the author’s life and work ‘as a whole’, nor are they homages to Susan Sontag’s ‘god’ or an excuse for platitudes and commemorative speeches. The focus of these many new publications is all of the texts and stories, the biographical places and relationships, the motifs and themes that connect us, as citizens of the 21st century, with Thomas Mann – from his defence of democracy in the Weimar Republic to his flight from Germany and the loss of his German citizenship, from the Mann family’s last summer in exile in the south of France to the special significance the sea held for Thomas Mann. And not only will there be plenty of new books to enjoy, but throughout the year there will be readings, exhibitions, conferences and panel discussions taking place in a variety of locations. To find out what’s on, head to the anniversary homepage of ‘Thomas Mann International’, a network of Thomas Mann institutes in Lübeck, Munich, Nida (Lithuania), Zurich and L.A. There is something for every reader. ♦

‘I was eleven years old when Samuel Fischer founded his publishing house in Berlin. Ten years later it was every young writer’s dream to publish a book with S. Fischer, including mine.’
Thomas Mann

The catalogue for S. Fischer’s anniversary programme can be found here: thomasmann.de

The anniversary homepage of ‘Thomas Mann International’: <https://mann2025.de>



Sascha Michel is a literary editor at S. Fischer Verlag. Since 2015, he has been working as a lecturer in Book and Media Practice at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. He is the author of several books, most recently *Die Unruhe der Bücher* (2020) and *Leere. Eine Kulturgeschichte* (2024).

Authors, Books, Awards

‘Democracy is a process, not a condition.’

The German Non-Fiction Prize honours an important contribution to political understanding



Deutscher Sachbuch Preis

The Non-Fiction Prize is awarded by the Foundation for Book Culture and the Promotion of Reading. It aims to raise the profile of non-fiction books as a basis for transferring knowledge, forming well-founded opinions and encouraging public discourse. The winner receives 25,000 euros. The 2025 ceremony will take place on 17 June at the Elbphilharmonie concert hall in Hamburg.



© Daniel Müller

Die Deutschen und ihre Demokratie seit den 1980er Jahren (A Thousand New Beginnings. Germans and Their Democracy Since the 1980s), winner of the 2024 German Non-Fiction Prize, she looks at perceptions of democracy among ‘normal’ people in the East and West, incorporating leaflets, petitions and letters.

She depicts the GDR not simply as a dictatorship, but as a society that even before 1989 – but above all at the time of German reunification (‘die Wende’) – was arguing over matters of democratic co-determination with great energy and real sincerity. She also shows how the AfD has managed to build on widespread perceptions of direct democracy in the East – after all, right-wing populists claim to be bringing ‘true’ democracy to the people at last.

Christina Morina is familiar with eastern Germany – and not just because she was born into a family of teachers in Frankfurt an der Oder, Brandenburg, in 1976. As an academic, she has dedicated herself to recent German history and the political culture of East and West Germany. Morina has lived and worked in the USA and Amsterdam. She has been a professor at the University of Bielefeld in North Rhine-Westphalia since 2019. She spent three years researching the sometimes complex relationship between German people and democracy. Her work is perhaps best encapsulated in the following quote from her book: ‘Democracy is a process, not a condition.’ A particularly poignant sentiment at a time when liberal democracies around the world are in crisis. ♦

For 20 years, the German Book Prize has been shining a spotlight on German literature by crowning the novel of the year. The German Non-Fiction Prize was launched in 2021 to draw more attention to works of non-fiction. It is awarded to a book originally published in German that provides fresh inspiration for societal debate – this is particularly beneficial for Germany’s culture of political dispute, which is all too often mired in clichés of the isolated East and all-powerful West. Historian Christina Morina has deviated from the well-worn paths of the usual East/West debates and taken a fresh approach. In *Tausend Aufbrüche*.



Holger Heimann is a literary critic and works for various newspapers and broadcasters. He lives in Berlin.

Understanding the World

Children love things that are familiar to them – their family microcosm and day-to-day encounters – and yet they are also curious about the big wide world, its challenges, and ultimately even the universe. Children’s non-fiction books and picture books provide refreshing and comforting answers to this (supposed) contradiction.

Whether philosophical, practical or scientific, children’s non-fiction combines knowledge, entertainment and illustrations like no other genre. These books don’t need to lecture their readers – they can tell stories with depth at a level that children will understand, enriching the literary landscape. Some even blur the lines between picture books and non-fiction.

Everyday sources of strength

In *Und wie wohnst du? (And Where Do You Live?)*, Berlin artist Judith Drews embarks on a charming voyage around the world to visit all sorts of houses. The book begins in the main characters’ adorable

treehouse. This poetic, clever and beautifully illustrated book uses a playful conceit to teach readers about different types of architecture.

In *Klamotten (Clothes)*, Juri Johansson and Sylwia Jaskierska take a very similar journey through wardrobes around the world, focusing on cultures, professions, regions and spiritualities. With simple, humorous explanations, the book also touches on critiques of consumption and historical origins. *Susie im Supermarkt (Susie in the Supermarket)* spends her Saturdays observing the customers while her mother works at the checkout. Susie sees everything, conducting sociological studies in the most literal sense. Written by Daniel Fehr with wonderful illustrations by Claudia Burmeister, the book’s language is powerful in its simplicity – incorporating people’s working conditions, habits and personal circumstances thoughtfully, gently and with humour.



[german-stories.de/
rightslist-2025](https://german-stories.de/rightslist-2025)

Further information about the Frankfurter Buchmesse’s collection (formerly known as ‘Children’s Books on Tour’) can be found here.

Philosophy builds resilience

In *Was kommt hinter dem Universum? (What Comes After The Universe?)*, philosopher Jörg Bernardy sets himself a huge task: explaining infinity. On each two-page spread, he skilfully tackles a question such as ‘can a person have an infinite number of thoughts?’ or ‘what is the smallest number in the world?’ Each question is followed by clearly



Christine Paxmann is the author of numerous books for adults and children and the publisher of *Eselsohr*, one of the most important German-language journals for children’s and young adult literature.





© Illustration by Sybille Hein, from Freiheit
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4+



Judith Drews
Und wie wohnst du?
Jacoby & Stuart

4+



Juri Johansson/
Sylwia Jaskierska
Klamotten
Kraus

4+



Daniel Fehr/
Claudia Burmeister
Susi im Supermarkt
Bohem

8+



Jörg Bernardy/
Andrea Stegmaier
Was kommt hinter dem Universum?
Beltz & Gelberg

4+



Sybille Hein
Freiheit
Fischer Sauerländer

7+



Inka Friese/
Sara Tabea Hinrichs
Das ist doch unfair
Fischer Sauerländer

5+



Antje Bones/
Nele Palmtag
Hast du Zeit?
Hanser

5+



Bille Weidenbach
Hätte, hätte, Eimerkette
Klett

4+



Miriam Schnell/
Annabelle von Sperber
Der Knall aus dem All
klein & groß

structured scientific, philosophical and experience-based answers that will enthrall little children and surprise older readers. With charming illustrations by Andrea Stegmaier, this is a book that will accompany readers throughout their lives.

In *Freiheit* (*Freedom*), all-rounder Sybille Hein has created a minimalist encyclopaedia of individual and societal freedom that gets to the point in just a few words with witty illustrations. This book acts as a primer, helping readers to understand the meaning behind this huge, important concept.

How does justice work around the world? Are we allowed to be unfair? *Das ist doch unfair!* (*But That's Unfair!*) by Inka Friese and Sarah Tabea Hinrichs looks at equal opportunities, poverty, education and social injustice, bringing these abstract concepts to life with explanations that are easy to understand. The book's colourful design accentuates its entertaining yet realistic approach to imparting knowledge.

Hast du Zeit? (*Do You Have Time?*) is a picture book that takes a practical, everyday approach to a big question – time – in a child-friendly way. Author Antje Bones and illustrator Nele Palmtag encourage discussion and provide fascinating philosophical prompts.

Surviving disasters

Climate change is causing catastrophic flooding all around the world. In *Hätte, hätte, Eimerkette* (*Many Drops Make a Bucket*), Bille Weidenbach vividly depicts the causes and effects of flooding through simple words and lavish full-page illustrations. Packed with details to be discovered, the book encourages readers to show bravery. Expert advice is provided by one of Germany's best-known and most distinguished meteorologists.

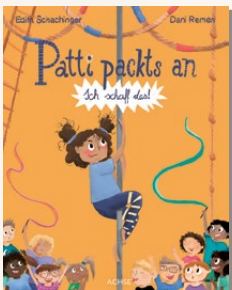
Der Knall aus dem All (*The Blast from Outer Space*) begins with a view from far above. Looking out of an aeroplane window, two children discover a circular piece of land. Their parents explain that this is the result of an asteroid, packing the Earth's history and its consequences into a thrilling plot which highlights the ongoing effects of events that occurred millions of years ago. Written by Miriam Schnell and illustrated by Annabelle von Sperber, this is another children's non-fiction book that perfectly combines genre, knowledge and entertainment with the art of illustration. ♦

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FROM AUSTRIA

More information about the publishers: buecher.at/mitglieder-arge-kinderbuch/

Children's Books from Austria

Cool!



Edith Schachinger, Dani Remen
Patti packts an
AGHSE



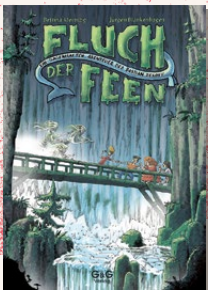
Bernadette Konzett, Horst Krieg
Ada und die Frau in Blau
BIBLIOTHEK DER PROVINZ



Magda Hassan, Sonja Stangl
Sorgenfalter
EDITION SHAUS



Jens Rasmus
Rosa und Bleistift
EDITION NILPFERD



Bettina Kleinszig, Jürgen Blankenhagen
Die sagenhaften Abenteuer des Bastian Zekoff - Fluch der Feen
GGG



Heinz Janisch, Helga Bansch
Und dann?
JUNGBRUNNEN



Minitta und Melanie Kandlbauer, Yani Hamdy
Gute Nachrichten aus aller Welt
LEYKAM



Julian Tapprich
Tigerträume
LUFTSCHACHT



Heinz Janisch
Die Stadt voller Rätsel - Ein Fall für Jaromir
OBELISK



Cornelia Travnicek, Raffaella Schöbitz
Henne Jenne
FIGUS



Leonora Leitl
Gute Frage, sagt die Buchstabensuppe
TYROLIA



Mathias Jeschke, Mathias Weber
Das Kamel Leon
VERMES





THE RISE OF ROMANCE IN GERMANY

A PINK Sensation

At the last Frankfurter Buchmesse in October 2024, an entire exhibition hall was dedicated to #BookTok. This was necessary because, in 2023, the crowds surging towards signings and meetings were simply overwhelming.

Last October, an armada of young, predominantly female readers flooded the new hall 1.2 throughout the weekend, when the Buchmesse opens to the public. Publishers such as Lyx, Forever, Everlove and Loewe Intense found their booths swamped by enthusiastic readers eager to meet their favourite authors and discover new titles. Not only readers but influencers, bloggers, agents, publishers, editors and of course authors showed up to the gathering. In fact, within the community that comes together under the banner of #BookTok (the hashtag used to mark 'bookish' content on TikTok) all of these roles merge into one. Fans become authors, influencers become editors, and bloggers become agents. Connections are cultivated, jobs are on offer, and money is made. To the joy of many and the chagrin of some, this genre, with its pastel covers, is the industry's golden goose.

The impact of BookTok in Germany is reflected in the numbers. In the first 40 weeks of 2024, these books enjoyed a 25.2% increase in sales compared to the same period in 2023. Within the literary

category, sales grew by an impressive 29.7%, and in the Young Adult genre sales surged by 45.9%. (Source: Börsenblatt)

In addition, there is a significant market for home-grown authors. While major international publishers offer many translations, both the big and the small publishing houses have achieved remarkable success with original German-language works.

What is 'New Adult'?

Watch out – it's very much not 'Young Adult'. For both parents and booksellers, there is often confusion between two very similar terms that mean two very different things within the genres that make up the #BookTok world: New Adult (NA) and Young Adult (YA).

Broadly speaking, New Adult is romance featuring college-age protagonists and comes with explicit scenes – some more explicit than others – but



Some like it hot – many publishers use a chilli scale to indicate the book's spiciness and what readers can expect.

Be it a 'love triangle', 'forbidden love' or 'enemies to lovers', YA fiction tropes and clichés reveal at first glance what a book is all about.

Hall 1.2 in figures:
8,000 square metres
of space, 46 exhibitors,
50 events for trade
and public visitors,
26 signing sessions,
10 Meet The Expert
events



© FB/Michelger-Merzel



Jenny Horst is the social media manager for the Hamburg-based bookstore chain Heymann. As an author, she has published three mysteries with Penguin Random House under the pseudonym Eve Lambert. Horst holds a degree in literature and wrote her thesis on romantic literature in the Middle Ages.

‘spice’ (the #BookTok synonym for everything erotic) is essential. YA – Young Adult – refers to books featuring high school-age protagonists. There is no ‘spice’ here; if anything physical occurs, the scene fades to black, usually depicting a young couple’s tender first encounter with intimacy.

Beware! Dark Romance!

Not so in the New Adult genre. Tropes like ‘enemies to lovers’ are quite the norm. Many of the relationships portrayed might fall under that modern adjective ‘toxic’. This has gone so far that Gräfe & Unzer, the German publishing house best known for its guides on nutrition and mental health, has established its own New Adult imprint, which guarantees a non-toxic love story, approved by psychologists. NA and YA are not the only

genres beloved within the #BookTok community. There is also Fantasy, there is Romantasy (where the romance may even unfold on dragonback, see *Fourth Wing*), and then there is Dark Romance. To the uninitiated, this term might sound somewhat intriguing – perhaps suggesting dark magic or a romance entwined with a thriller plot. In reality, however, it revolves around unhealthy, often non-consensual, violent relationships depicted in graphic detail. My advice to booksellers: ensure your product placement is spot-on and find a way to alert sales personnel to these distinctions.

How did it come about?

As an author who participated in the early days of self-publishing for the Kindle, I witnessed the *Fifty Shades of Grey* phenomenon just as I witnessed Anna Todd’s *After* series get big. Then there was

Colleen Hoover, with her pink and pastel-covered titles that touched readers on a more emotional level. Having broken down the barrier of the ‘sex novel’, authors and publishers went on to dissect the success of certain books and shake them up into a cocktail: college-age protagonists with plenty of spice and plenty of heartbreak.

A stroke of genius, perhaps, was making these books not only a pleasure to read but also to display. Books became collectibles, with painted edges, designed to stand out in photographs. I still recall the first time I came across the term ‘shelfie’. Since then, the enthusiasm for showcasing books has only grown stronger, with readers proudly displaying their passion for stories both in real life and on social media.

It’s not just about books

One might argue that romantic and erotic literature has existed since the invention of writing, the plots and the tropes are pretty much the same as ever, so why is romance this prominent in the public eye? Well, today it’s all about community, friendship and female self-confidence. What used to be a ‘guilty’ pleasure has become an unapologetic one. Nobody feels ashamed about reading an especially raunchy scene anymore. On BookTok, you can find thousands of like-minded readers within seconds, people get to know each other and true friendships form.

At my workplace, a good-sized bookshop in an affluent residential district of Hamburg, we often see groups of young people gathering in front of the BookTok shelf, animatedly discussing books they’ve read. They have little need for advice; they already know everything from their online communities or via word of mouth at their schools or workplaces. For booksellers, this is a joy – not just because of the profits but because it firmly establishes the book as a medium of entertainment in the lives of young people.

Publishing houses have now begun launching imprints to cater to these readers as they outgrow pastel romances, offering more literary options. So even if critics dismiss BookTok books as trivial, for the book trade it’s nothing short of a love story.



Here are some recommendations of German YA/NA authors with whom foreign rights managers are hoping for international success.



Michael Then, Gräfe und Unzer:
Katharina Katz,
Say It With a Love Song
‘A love story with depth and a happy ending – psychologically profound and movingly told.’



Daniela Steiner, Carlsen:
Kate Corell,
Never Be My Date
‘Loved by her fans for surprising plot twists and original ideas: *doppelgänger* motif & secret games = real sizzling feelings!’



Giuseppe Terrano, Bastei Lübbe:
Laura Kneidl,
The Darlington – Henry & Kate
‘A modern Cinderella story among London’s high society by #1 *Spiegel* bestselling New Adult author Laura Kneidl.’



Marie-Charlotte Kettlitz, Ullstein: Kristina Moninger,
The First to Fall (Red Summer 1)
‘The #1 bestselling author returns with an addictive new NA throromance series following the international success of *Breaking Waves*.’



Elisabeth Wiedemann, Piper:
Kathinka Engel,
Words Unspoken
‘A love triangle (maybe?) with an unusual twist – the first of three stories about the indie publisher Badger Books, written by bestselling and versatile author Kathinka Engel.’



Dana Nitz, HarperCollins Germany:
Katharina Juli,
Heart Racing
‘Exciting sports romance about Formula 1 – with a strong female character in a male-dominated world.’

Connecting People Worldwide

Promoting international exchange, supporting ambitious young professionals in the book industry – for many years, Frankfurter Buchmesse has been helping international industry representatives to access networking and professional development opportunities through its successful grant programmes.



[buchmesse.de/en/
fellowship-and-
grant-programmes](https://buchmesse.de/en/fellowship-and-grant-programmes)

Up-to-date information about our grant programmes can be found here

1,2 Alumni and Alumnae of the Special Programme Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries 2024 and at the Romanian Stand at Frankfurter Buchmesse

The **Frankfurt Fellowship Programme** for young publishers, rights managers, license managers and literary agents from all over the world was launched on the Frankfurter Buchmesse's 50th anniversary in 1998. Over 400 participants from over 60 countries have now taken part in this intensive two-week training and networking programme which includes visits to publishing houses, agencies, bookshops, and of course to the Frankfurter Buchmesse.

For around 60 years, the **Frankfurt Invitation Programme** has been bringing publishers from Africa, Asia, the Arab world, Latin America and the Caribbean to Frankfurt every year to give presentations at the Buchmesse. The publishers also benefit from professional development and networking opportunities. This programme targets small independent publishers, helping them to establish themselves on the international stage

by taking part in the world's largest publishing industry get-together.

The special programme **Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries** brings together publishers, editors, license managers and literary agents from Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine, connecting them with each other and with other Buchmesse attendees from all over the world and helping them develop the skills they need to expand their international licensing business. The Special Programme for Publishers from Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries was created in 2022 by Frankfurter Buchmesse and its long-standing Ukrainian partners International Book Arsenal Festival and Goethe-Institut Ukraine in response to the full-scale war in Ukraine. Its goal is to connect talented publishers from Ukraine and the region with international counterparts and make their work visible. ♦



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‘It was especially useful to learn first-hand about the functioning of independent publishing and the book market in Germany. Attending the programme made it possible for Himpar Editores’ books to reach bookstores focused on Latin American books in Germany, specifically in Berlin and Bonn, with which we now have a commercial relationship. The programme was not only a productive experience but also an unforgettable one for the bonds built during those days.’

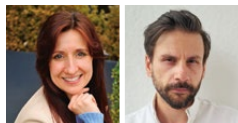


Oscar D. Campos Becerra, Himpar Editores, Columbia
Frankfurt Invitation Programme 2024

‘The importance of the Invitation Programme cannot be overstated. For small and independent publishers, the programme is an invaluable opportunity particularly in terms of meeting other publishers from the global South. There is no way the press could have interacted with the brilliant, passionate publishers in this year’s cohort. These interactions have raised the possibility of a South-South dialogue which would probably not have been possible without the Programme.’

Abhijit Gupta, Jadavpur University Press, India
Frankfurt Invitation Programme 2024

‘It was an incredibly enriching experience, not only because it helped us define a new area of activity we are eager to pursue but also because it provided us with invaluable opportunities to connect with publishers from all over the world. We are now in correspondence with various members of the event, and we believe these relationships will be instrumental in helping us publish outstanding books and build even more interesting business partnerships in the future.’



Maryana Kondzelka, Director, Irbis Comics Publishing, Ukraine
Special Programme Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries

‘Learning from other publishers’ experiences and strategies was not only inspiring but also equipped me with practical tools to enhance my work back home. The programme’s emphasis on collaboration and resilience underscored the importance of building a tighter international community of publishers who can support each other in facing adversity and share knowledge for the benefit of our readers.’

Vlad Adascalitei, Rights Manager, Storia Books, Romania
Special Programme Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries

‘The Programme is a masterclass for any publisher looking to sell and buy rights around the world. Initially I had limited knowledge about it, but within the first week I established new friendships, connections and relationships that are crucial for our publishing journey. The publishing house tour helped me better understand the German publishing industry and appreciate its synergy. Every publisher we met had its own unique feature. I am glad I was able to listen, share and learn.’



Mercy Kirui Michira, Senior Manager Content, eKitabu, Kenya
Frankfurt Fellowship Programme 2024

‘Even though I am in contact with international colleagues every day, until now I have never had the kind of sophisticated insights into different book markets that the other Fellows have given me. In these tumultuous political (and cultural) times, it is more important than ever to promote international exchange between publishing professionals, as the Fellowship does so brilliantly.’

Merle Ostendorp, Rights Manager, Wagenbach, Germany
Frankfurt Fellowship Programme 2024

The three grant programmes are funded by the German Foreign Office.

‘With the programme’s powerful support, I am confident that our participants are becoming the driving force of our book industry in the region – during and above all after the war.’
Yulia Kozlovets,
International Book Arsenal Festival,
Ukraine

3,4 Participants in the Frankfurt Fellowship Programme 2024 and visiting Aufbau Publishing House in Berlin
5 Participants in the Frankfurt Invitation Programme 2024
6 Networking Dinner Fellowship and Grant Programmes 2024



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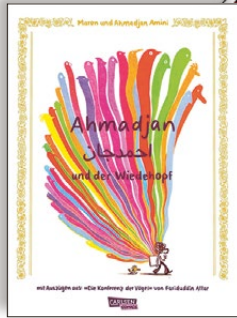
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Recommended German Graphic Novels

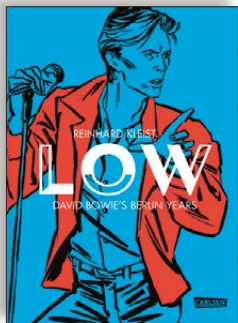
The Frankfurter Buchmesse's current collection of comics and graphic novels can be found here: german-stories.de/comics



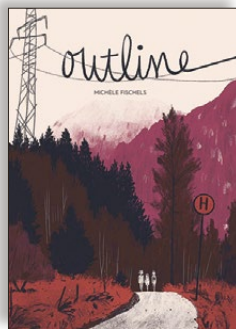
Maren Amini
Ahmadjan und der Wiedehopf
(Carlsen)



Hannah Brinkmann
Zeit heilt keine Wunden
(Avant)



Reinhard Kleist
Low
(Carlsen)



Michèle Fischels
Outline
(Reprodukt)



Dinah Wernli
Louise
(Edition Moderne)



© Edition Moderne/Dinah Wernli

Happy Birthday Andere Bibliothek



One of Germany's most beautiful book series is celebrating its 40th birthday: founded in January 1985 by Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Franz Greno, Die Andere Bibliothek now comprises almost 500 titles, all of them in particularly beautiful and high-quality editions. It covers a colourful spectrum from rediscovered classics and unjustly forgotten literary treasures to original editions and German first editions of writers from other cultures who are unknown in the German-speaking world, and has enjoyed some spectacular successes, such as Christoph Ransmayr's *Die letzte Welt* (The Last World). Since 2012, the volumes of Die Andere Bibliothek have been published under the umbrella of Aufbau Verlage in Berlin.

Book to Screen



© Oleksandr Piskalnyj, Pixabay

The Frankfurter Buchmesse offers an exchange between publishers and the film and streaming industry through masterclasses, matchmaking, networking events, talks and panel discussions.

Save the Date:
The next Book-to-Screen Day will take place on Friday 17 October 2025.

buchmesse.de/en/rights-licenses/book-screen

A chance for young talents: two awards promote young book professionals and attract a lot of attention



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© Christin Aul

1 Katharina Vlcek won the Serafina Award for Best Young Illustrator for her book *Mittelmeer. Tauche ein in die mediterrane Welt*, which she researched, wrote, illustrated and designed. The jury was particularly impressed by her keen observational skills and her penchant for complexity. The German Academy for Children's and Young Adult Literature, which bestows the prize, honoured the book with the distinction 'Climate, Environment and Nature Book Recommendation'. Katharina Vlcek prevailed over approximately 60 submitted works from 42 German-language publishers. | **2** #yeaward – once again this year, the book community will evaluate outstanding young talents from all areas of the German literary industry and award the Börsenblatt Young Excellence Award by online voting. We are looking for personalities up to the age of 39 who are making an impact in the book industry – be it in a bookshop, publishing house, retail company or as an independent professional. The winner will receive a comprehensive package of further education and networking opportunities. The #yeaward24 went to Helen Daughtrey and her online book club 'Mädels, die lesen' ('Girls who read').

Master of Puns



© Tobias Bahm

The Paul Celan Prize for outstanding translation into German went to Thomas Weiler (pictured here during his acceptance speech at the ceremony at the Literary Colloquium Berlin) for his translations of lesser-known literature from Belarusian, Polish and Russian. The prize was awarded in particular for his translation of the novel *Europas Hunde* (Europe's Dogs) by Alhierd Bacharevič (Volland & Quist), which is banned in Belarus and considered extremist. The jury praised Weiler's magnificent translation, which brings out the different voices in the novel with impressive creativity and linguistic joy. The prize is worth € 25,000 and is awarded annually by the German Literature Fund.

Rights List – Stories for Children and Young Adults



Picture and Board Books, Early Reading, Children's Novels, Young Adult Novels and Romance, Non-Fiction, Graphic Novels, Manga, Education, Fantasy, Creativity, Quizzes and Games

With nearly 70 new German-language titles for all age groups from very young children to young adults, the Frankfurter Buchmesse's Rights List – Stories for Children and Young Adults will be travelling the world again this year. Have a look: german-stories.de/rightslist-2025

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Berlin, a Time Machine

A Column by Katja Petrowskaja



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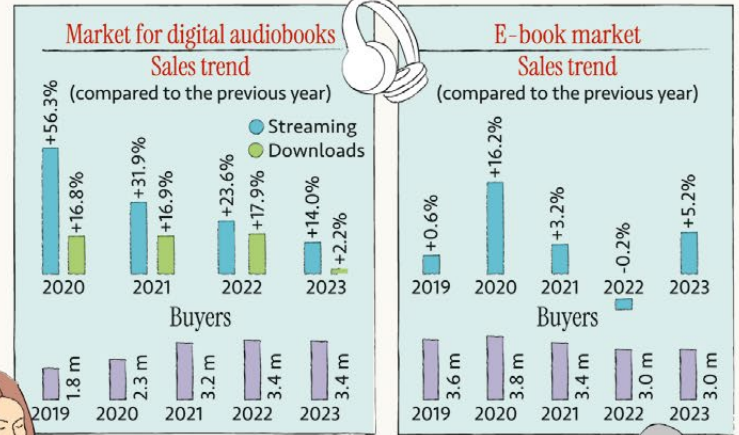
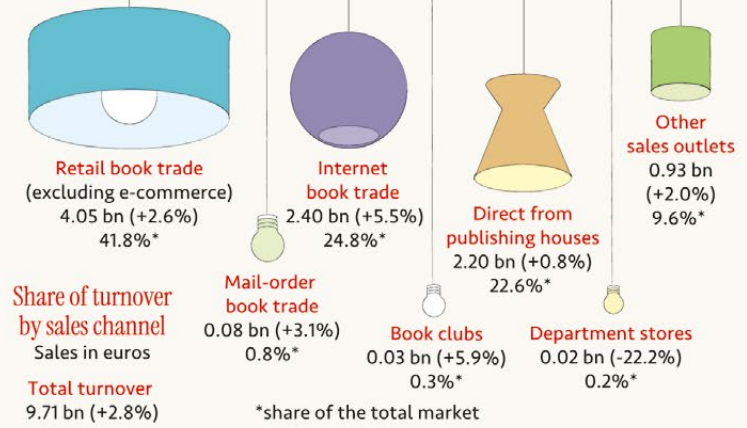
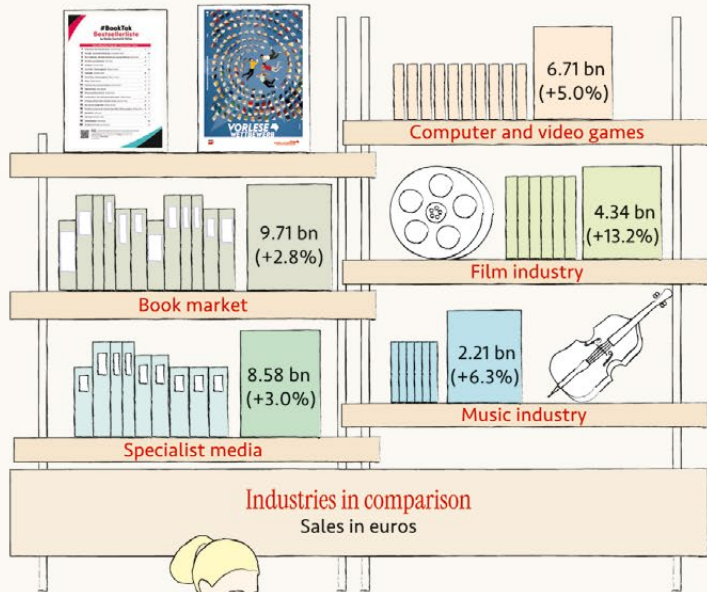


Katja Petrowskaja was born in Kyiv. She studied literature in Tartu, New York and Stanford, and received her PhD in Moscow. Since 1999 she has lived and worked in Berlin. Her literary debut *Vielleicht Esther* was translated into more than 20 languages and won numerous awards. Her most recent book *Als wäre es vorbei. Texte aus dem Krieg* was published by Suhrkamp in spring 2025.

There are many cities I love, but Berlin is the only one to shake me to my core. It was December 1995. As a 25-year-old from Kyiv, I had already visited the USA and other countries. And now I stood in the centre of Berlin, on a huge, marshy piece of land by the name of Potsdamer Platz. I couldn't believe my eyes. This famous square, one of Europe's largest transport hubs before the Second World War, looked as though the war had only just ended. The Wall was gone, but it had preserved the traces of the war for decades. An endless, empty space, a muddy hole in the ground, just as I had seen in Wim Wenders' film *Wings of Desire*. In the film there was also a circus, but that was absent. In the middle of this hole there stood a single unscathed structure, the 'Weinhaus Huth'; we walked through the darkness, crossing the mud on boardwalks to visit an art exhibition. Inside there were many artists of indeterminate age and origin, like a spin-off from the circus in Wim Wenders' film. At the edge of this wasteland, yellow lights illuminated the city library and Philharmonie concert hall, its roof resembling a flock of birds startled into motion. This image has stayed with me – a luminous treasure – releasing a yearning for this city, a city in which something happened, set itself in motion, where everything was just being born, a city in which consensus prevailed on war and peace and everything changed for the better. The wounds of the past created spaces for the future. Everything I had missed out on, I could catch up on in Berlin. I came from a society in which you were expected to play violin at the age of five, chess at ten, and be a grandmother by your mid-forties at the latest. In Berlin you could still be a student at thirty, and nobody wanted to grow up – the grown-ups were the ones waging the wars. In this place, you stayed young, created art and were never too late. I wanted to live in this undefined city, in this great circus of time, forever young. And so in 1999 I moved to Berlin, into the thick of the new millennium, and fell pregnant right away. In those days it couldn't be avoided in Berlin; my district had the highest birth rate in the whole of Europe. In my homeland, 25 was late to become a parent; in Berlin, I was one of the youngest mothers. I was still a beginner in the language; preparing to give birth was my first German course. We learned the words for 'push' and 'pant' and many others that didn't all seem appropriate to use in company. The birth itself began in the spirit of Berlin at that time: when the contractions started, we called 112, the fire service. Back then we still had the 'stork wagon', a special ambulance run by the Berlin fire service that was equipped for delivering babies. The firemen were accompanied by a midwife and carried me down the stairs on a throne, as though I were queen of the city. We drove through the night from East to West, through the Brandenburg Gate, and then Rosa was born; a rose not entirely without thorns, just like everything we love. ♦

The Book Business

Data for Germany 2023, change compared to the previous year in brackets



Translations into German: most important languages
Number of translations (first release)

English
5,178
(share: 59.1%)

French
904
(share: 10.3%)

Japanese
1,119
(share: 12.8%)

Licenses sold abroad: most important countries
Number of agreements (first release)
6,527 (-1.9%)

China 754
(share: 11.6%)

Czech Republic 441
(share: 6.8%)

Russia 368
(share: 5.6%)

How much do new books cost?
Hardcover only

Fiction
19.18 Euro
(+3.0%)

Textbooks
19.26 Euro
(-3.3%)

Children's & young adult
14.23 Euro
(+5.1%)

Product groups: share of turnover

Fiction 35.5% (+7.7%)

Education & study guides 10.7% (+5.0%)

Companions 12.4% (-1.4%)

Children's & young adult 18.3% (+2.5%)

Non-fiction 10.4% (+2.7%)

Science 8.2% (-5.9%)

Travel 4.5% (-1.0%)

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See you at Frankfurter Buchmesse from 15 – 19 October 2025!

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