

NUESTRA AUTORA DEL MES: GERDA RAIDT



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Children play an important role. But they have narrow shoulders.

- We know about your formal background in graphic design and your career as an author and illustrator, but we would be interested in the reasons that get you involved in your environmental books as *Müll* and *Das ist auch meine Welt*. What pushed you into that way? What made you to open your eyes to what is happening in the world?



Being an illustrator, I was often dissatisfied that I had so little influence on the themes and contents of the books I've worked on. I had a growing desire to spend my time and capabilities on the topics that I would have liked to see in the children's department in the bookstores.

Until 2019, children's books only showed the wonders of nature: rainforest, deep sea, polar bears. As a mother it was always my job to mention that this was all in danger. I really missed children's books to help me to find words to tell my children about our huge environmental problems.



- Our path begins with a suitcase full of problems (and rubbish, especially) and we also have plenty of knowledge to understand that we have reached the limit, that in some cases, it is unsustainable. However, people as you mention on your books want to close their eyes and to go forward and even, they deny current evidence. What do you think is the first step to help them to wake up?



Anyone who struggles to live sustainably will face such people. That's why they're in the books. In my school readings I often ask children: what would you say to them? Children are very good at finding answers. Justice plays a big role for them; we constantly educate them to behave correctly. They see through when someone acts only for his own personal benefit and to the disadvantage of the community.

I think they play an important role. It's often them who question the habits and carry the environmental discussion into the family.

- Your last book, *Das ist auch meine Welt*, it is important how individual actions can make an important change, especially in terms of awareness and claims of new politics to companies and governments. Can education in sustainability and ethical trade make a difference or do you think unbridled consumerism and everyday advertising bombardment will definitely win the match?

I see hope. With all the media and our worldwide connections, it's becoming more and more difficult to hide immoral behaviour and environmental damage. Everything is visible now. Look at all the companies frantically trying to make their products look "green". There's a big pressure. But we need education and practice so that people understand how everything is interrelated and can identify lies and false promises.

Unfortunately, it takes a long time for environmental education to make it into schools and schoolbooks. That's why children's books have to take over this task for now.

¡Deje de asustar a los niños con historias que vaticinan un futuro tan oscuro!



- We believe that ethical tags could help us to be aware of the truth behind food, clothing and even a mobile phone. We are usually the consumers of these products, and we live in a lie in relation to the world realities. How do you think that children are facing this way of consuming? What is the importance of environmental education and reducing our ecological footprint?

I find it fun for children to see through such false promises. In school readings I sometimes talk to them about selling tricks. They are all aware that tricks and advertisement are being used to get them to buy something. Some of them are also aware that our food, for instance, does not really come from such a beautiful farm as pictured on the packaging. Then they are outraged. They were taken for fools! If they don't fall for it, this increases their self-esteem. Aside of the ecological benefit it lifts them up. It empowers them.

- Energy production is an issue that, unfortunately, is on everyone lips and many people are setting their sights on "green energies" and self-sufficiency. Could it be an inflexion point or do you think it is a marketing strategy?

I actually think that "dirty" fossil energy will be harder and harder to sell. At least if we manage to educate people about the negative impact on our planet.

- Our last question: when do you think we will realize that the longer it takes to change our lifestyle, the more we will have to sacrifice? Will the children, thanks to environment education and book, like those you have written, make the difference and help us to do the change? What experiences do you get from your readings in the schools? How do children react? What are their contributions?

Children are very interested in environmental problems. They have all seen pictures of turtles trapped in plastic. They have seen polluted air a water and littered beaches themselves. When I go into schools, I am often surprised that this seems to be one of the first occasions for them to discuss such problems in class. Often the teachers tell me afterwards: "I didn't know that they knew so much and were so interested in those topics!" So, I think we urgently need to change that, quickly.

Everyone wants their children to be better off, at least not worse off than they are. It's difficult to live a wasteful live and meet children's eyes that ask you: Why? Can't we change? So yes, I think children play an important role. But they have narrow shoulders. We can't burden them alone with all our problems. Instead, it's us up to us adults. It's mainly us who must make great efforts to change. For the sake of our children and grandchildren.

Honestly, sometimes I wonder if I should not make books for old people instead.

Gerda Raidt

She was born in 1975, studied graphic design at Halle and illustration at HGB Leipzig. She has worked as an illustrator since 2004, and she has published some no-fiction books, as *Basura* and *Este es también mi mundo*.

