

## ASSIGNMENT

### Kunstdetektivene

Would you like to write an assignment about Kunstdetektivene? Watch the video interview (click the film icon)

#### **10 things I can't do without in my study**

1. A window, with a town outside. I can write just about anywhere as long as my study has a window with a town outside.
2. An espresso machine that you need to fidget with. Like a La Pavoni or a Gaggia espresso machine. Preferably, with small espresso cups that have Picasso bull motifs like the ones my wife gave me. Alternatively, a coffee bar in the basement.
3. A suit jacket. I can throw this on in case my mother comes by. Then, she can see that I have a dignified lifestyle and a proper job.
4. Word Perfect 5.1 from the 80s. That blue screen with its unnaturally grey-white letters is magical and the premise for my entire creative life.
5. Music. Preferably film music, soundtracks from relatively lousy films that I haven't seen. Or the Goldberg variations by Bach.
6. Three books: The Bible, a book with the collective works of the artist Giotto, and the Little Prince by Saint-Exupéry.
7. Ephemeral women who pass by my window.
8. A good chair. One that I can tip back and forth on the off chance an ephemeral woman passes by my window.

9. A calendar. Preferably with reproductions of old travel posters, steamships en route to New York, planes to Cairo, train to Venice.

10. Expectations of a good autumn and that God's merciful light will shine through my window now and again.

### **The 20 most frequently asked questions**

A lot of pupils write to me and wonder about a lot of different stuff when they are writing an assignment and the like. Here are answers to the 20 most frequently asked questions that I have received:

1. How old were you when your first book was published?

ANSWER: 23 years old.

2. How many pages has the thickest book you have written?

ANSWER: 549 pages.

3. How many books have you written?

ANSWER: There are more and more, so you'll just have to count them for yourself. [Click here to see them all.](#)

4. Have you been to all the cities and countries you have written about?

ANSWER: Yes. I have visited many of them several times. All except for Sydney. I was ill when I was supposed to travel there so I haven't been there yet.

5. What is the best book you have written?

ANSWER: The painter, Edward Munch was once asked which of his painted works was the best. He replied that it was impossible to answer, the paintings are like his children, he couldn't decide who he liked best. I am a bit like that when it comes to my books.

6. Which mobile phone do you have?

ANSWER: Nokia.

7. Are you a famous author, so famous that people recognise you on a street in Paris?

ANSWER: No.

8. What inspires you?

ANSWER: Everything, people around me, things I hear and see. I read a lot, watch films and series. My short-term memory is poor so I need to write down my ideas immediately or else I'll forget them.

9. Do you have a dog?

ANSWER: No, but I have an aquarium.

10. How long do you spend writing a book?

ANSWER. I spend from fifteen minutes to six years. Usually somewhere in between.

11. Have you experienced what you write about?

ANSWER: No, not directly. But I have often had the same feelings as those I write about.

12. Has it ever happened that you have written something that was not published because the publisher didn't want it?

ANSWER: Yes, unfortunately but fortunately too. That wasn't so good. Usually, I just leave it aside. After a while, I may re-write it so that it becomes a totally different book. Some I just leave without doing anything more with them. Most of the books I write get published.

13. Do you know other authors?

ANSWER: Yes.

14. Do you know J.K. Rowling?

ANSWER: No.

15. Do you write in both Norwegian Bokmål and Norwegian Nynorsk?

ANSWER: Yes. The majority of my books are written in Norwegian Nynorsk but the kunstdetektivene series is in Norwegian Bokmål.

16. What is your favourite book?

ANSWER: The Bible.

17. Which mobile do you have?

ANSWER: I have answered that before, see question 6.

18. Have you ever received a 6-star review?

ANSWER: Yes, in VG newspaper. I wondered for a while about getting a tattoo of the stars on my shoulder, but decided against it.

19. Will you write more books?

ANSWER: I hope so. I am always unsure as to whether or not I can manage to write a book when I start writing. Always, in fact.

20. What would you be if you weren't an author?

ANSWER: A racecar driver. I like driving.

### **10 things I believe I have thought about when it comes to writing for children and teenagers**

So far, I have mainly written for children and teenagers. I often get asked about this even though I don't find it very different to write for adults or children. I still pay attention though when great writers like Jon Fosse point out the difficulties with writing children's stories, especially as he, himself, is so good at it. There is no place here to discuss his or others opinions on the autonomy of art but I would like to mention that there definitely are differences and that I have more than likely taken these on board even if somewhat sub-consciously. I still write the books I write because they are exactly what I want to write. The best indicator of me writing the way I should is when I want to write. I don't feel comfortable as an author for children. I get inspiration from good children and teenage fiction authors like for example, Astrid Lindgren, Erlend Loe,

Rune Belsvik, Annika Thor, Fam Ekman, Mark Twain, Stein Erik Lunde, Roald Dahl, Gunnar Ardelius or C.S. Lewis. It's a lengthy list. Of course, I get just as enthusiastic about writing when I read Ian McEwan, the Bible, Cormac McCarthy, Jon Fosse, Amos Oz, Marguerite Duras, Graham Greene, J.M. Coetzee. And where does Antoine de Saint-Exupéry really fit in? In a word: Good literature is what is significant.

Here are a few things that I have thought about when it comes to my writing, not exactly rules or anything like that, they're just there somewhere on the hard disk. They're a bit helter-skelter and I could probably have explained it totally differently. I will probably disagree with myself tomorrow. It is quite likely that I write these lists to give an illusion of structure. Anyway:

1. I need to write quite different books and have different kinds of readers. I also need to establish a fact: Children are just as unique as adults, there is no "one" type of literature that absolutely all kids like, there are no definite "silly expressions", "happy colours" or "scary noises" that hit the spot with everyone. Children are not different "target groups" but independent individuals. It has to be mentioned though: Just like adults, they often follow the flock.

2. Children are always entitled to the author giving proper thought to language. Clichés limp sentences and everything else that is idiomatically unreliable is an abomination – be it simply an introduction to a picture book (even if, such introductions are seldom written). Anything else is disrespectful to the reader. The majority of my time is spent working and reworking text. Again and again and once more for good measure. Of course, I am never satisfied but at some point or another you have to let it go, it's finished and have it published. If someone says that I am slipshod with language, I need to go into the corner and give it a lot of thought.

3. There are usually some characters in my books that young readers can identify with based on their age. I think it is a kind of rule.

4. Even though I don't intend to constantly keep my readers on the edge of their seats, I do I try to make my books exciting. It's not that easy for me to explain what I mean by

"exciting" but I can feel it when it's there, a driving force in the text so that the reader just can't put it down. That applies to all books really. (I don't even like the word "exciting", by the way).

5. Typical series/genre books should never be underrated. There are lots of nuances today. For quite a lot of authors, these typical genre books were their ticket to literature. I read loads of books with glossy covers with titles that transported me to Zanzibar. I have even written several books like that myself because I think it is fun. I try to anyway as best as I can.

6. In spite of my ever-growing doubt that books possess an absolute immunity, I still believe in their power as a medium, purely physical, three-dimensional. A book must have the right weight, the right paper, a good cover, interesting design, and good illustrations, be legible etc. It should take pride in its appearance. I think that different types of picture books are a fantastic medium. Maybe it's because as an unsuccessful illustrator I want pictures in half of my books. Some of the most inspirational I know of is working with illustrators. They are good readers and often read a text with a freshness that only children possess. It is incredibly inspirational after they have re-read my books through their illustrations. My words become something more, something greater.

7. I have written several books about art. Through literature, children can receive the keys to the adult world of art, literature, music etc but this shouldn't be imposed upon them through forced education that kills all interest. Or make things trivial or childish. Who was really interested in poetry as a result of poetry analysis in secondary school? Obligatory trips to the Munch museum and others are a must. Having a curriculum and giving tests in art history is a definite. Art and aesthetics are also subjects. Those kids need to be coerced.

8. When it comes to writing for children, the best advice I have been given is to be loyal to those who are knee-high. I don't remember who said it to me but I heard it just after I made my debut. One can write about birth and death, about falling in love or broken hearts but just not in a language that is cryptic for them. There is a difference between

being cryptic and showing them a secret. It is not so important for children to understand everything; sometimes being aware of something is good enough. Explicitness kills. Not cool at all. That is part of the challenge in writing for children. All great art and literature carries a secret.

9. I write about things that interest me. Everything else is meaningless. And it is not allowed to lie about stuff like this just because one is lazy. Children often like the same things as adults. They don't like uninspiring, idealising children's books with a high cocoa-drinking content and parodical sweet grandparents from a childhood that has never really existed. Neither does the opposite: Books to order on eating disorders and a focus on fictitious problems are seldom inspiring. As an author I need to be in touch with my own stuff. That is the single most important point. Then it is possible to write well about both grandparents and eating disorders.

10. Children are open for God's existence.