



The page is decorated with several thick, orange, hand-drawn brushstrokes. These strokes are scattered across the white background, some forming loops and others being more linear, creating a whimsical and artistic frame around the central text.

Welcome to the quirky world of Eva Lindström's picture books! It's a place where people, animals and nature live side by side on their own terms. This guide is designed to accompany Lindström's picture book *Everyone Walks Away*, providing an introduction to a writer and illustrator whose works employ absurd humour to stretch the boundaries of what a story can be.

# Picture book artist Eva Lindström

Eva Lindström (born in 1952) is a Swedish author and illustrator of children's picture books. She has published around 30 of her own picture books and has illustrated even more stories written by other authors. Earlier in her career, she created comics that displayed the same offbeat humour. In Lindström's debut book *Kattmössan* ('*The Cat's Hat*', 1988), Britta's cat goes missing at around the same time her neighbour shows up wearing a new fur coat. Who wouldn't be suspicious?



Photo: Susanne Kronholm

Lindström works with watercolours, gouache and pencil in muted, mottled tones. Her compositions feature skewed perspectives and a sense of open space in indoor and outdoor scenes alike. Several of her works have been adapted for animation and for the stage. Lindström's characters often interact in unexpected ways. Understated plots play out in sparse dialogue or meaningful glances and gestures, as in *Limpan är sugen* ('*Sizzles Is Peckish*', 1997) – a wordless drama between a hungry dog and her human.

She is an expert at 'boiling down' big emotions, existential questions and complex relationships into compact descriptions and pithy dialogue. Meanwhile, her illustrations spread out across the pages and speak their own language. Some of her books may appear light on action, because they do not follow a traditional dramatic arc. But readers who take time to read and really look will find oceans to discover.

Lindström avoids hard-and-fast rules. There are no clear dividing lines between children and adults, humans and animals, imagination and



reality. An owl might work as a freelance nature TV presenter or open a flying school. A forest might go on vacation. As readers, we can never be quite sure where we are. The ending might be left open. What really happens with the children's hats that are made to vanish during a party in *Hit med våra mössor* ('Give Us Back Our Hats', 2009)?

Eva Lindström brings a sense of randomness that reminds us how absurd life really is. With her quirky mix of warm-hearted, sly humour, she entices us to see and feel in new ways, contribute our own ideas and figure out what's going on the story and why.



Photo: Susanne Kronholm



# About this book

In *Everyone Walks Away*, Frank is left on his own when Tilly, Paul and Milan walk off. The other three stick together and are always doing something fun – preferably near Frank, so he can see what a good time they’re having. Things continue in the same vein until Frank heads off too. At home, he cries into a pot. He adds sugar to his tears and cooks them into a batch of jam. Perhaps the others might like some tea and jam sandwiches? They just might.

Relationships are a recurring theme in Eva Lindström’s picture books. They might take the form of an unlikely friendship between a woman and an owl, as in *Min vän Lage* (*My Friend Lage*, 2001); friendship on one’s own terms, as in *Jag tycker inte om vatten* (*I Don’t Like Water*, 2010), or competing for the attention of a shared best friend, as in *Jag gillar Stig* (*I Like Stig*, 1998). In *Everyone Walks Away*, the narrative centres on the tension between the close-knit group of three and Frank, who is left out.

Lindström is a subtle storyteller, often allowing her illustrations to contradict the text. It’s worth noticing what the characters are looking at. Even though the three friends all claim to go off on their own, they maintain eye contact with one another. They sneak glances, keep watch and creep up on each other. Their expressions are sometimes taunting, sometimes curious, surprised or resigned.

The illustrations also cast doubt on the story’s claim that Frank and the others walk away from one another. The objects that keep appearing – the scooter, tape player, fence and so on – indicate that the characters are following each other around near Frank’s house.

Like most of Eva Lindström’s books, *Everyone Walks Away* appeals to a wide age range. The social ‘game’ it depicts is not age-specific. Most of us can relate to what it feels like to be left out. Frank’s glum mood, the muted colour scheme and the recurring line ‘It’s the same as always’ give the book a melancholy undertone. What is the strange brew he is cooking up? The description of the cooking process veers between realism and fantasy, heightening the mysterious symbolism. Frank boils it down to just the right consistency, but its exact significance is left open. Perhaps it’s his way of reconciling with the others. Or perhaps it’s his way of getting even.











# Pre-reading questions

- Think about the cover illustration, the book's title and the colours on the cover.
- Who is the person on the front cover?
- Does the title give any clues to what the book is about?
- What thoughts are evoked by the colour scheme?

## If you read the book aloud with someone

- Take time to savour the words and linger on each page, even though the story is brief and can be read very quickly. You can allow the picture book to speak for itself without any additional explanation the first time you read it.
- Be open to different ways of interpreting and understanding the story. Read it through several times. A good picture book will stand up to many repeated readings. Re-reading can provide new insights and deeper understanding.







# During and post-(re-)reading questions

- Why isn't Frank allowed to be with the others?
- What does it feel like to be left out?
- What does it feel like to be in a group that excludes other people?
- Why do the others keep playing near Frank?
- Why does Frank suddenly walk away?
- How do the others react when he walks away?
- Why does Frank cry?
- What are the ingredients in Frank's jam?
- How does he make his jam the right consistency?
- What do you think Frank's jam tastes like?
- What other recipes does Frank's cookbook contain?
- What do the others do while Frank is making his jam?
- Why does he want to open the windows when the jam is ready?
- Why does Frank put out just three place settings?
- What happens during the tea break and afterwards?



**About this guide**

This guide was written by Maria Lassén-Seger, project researcher in literary studies and Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award jury member, 2008–2021.

***Everyone Walks Away***

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Photo: Roine Karlsson

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The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award was created in 2002 by the Swedish government to promote every child's right to great stories. This global award is given annually to a person or organisation for their outstanding contribution to children's and young adult literature. With a prize of five million Swedish kronor, it is the largest award of its kind. Above all else, it highlights the importance of reading, today and for future generations. Find more information at [alma.se](http://alma.se)



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