



Search for books, ideas or people



Olivia Snajje

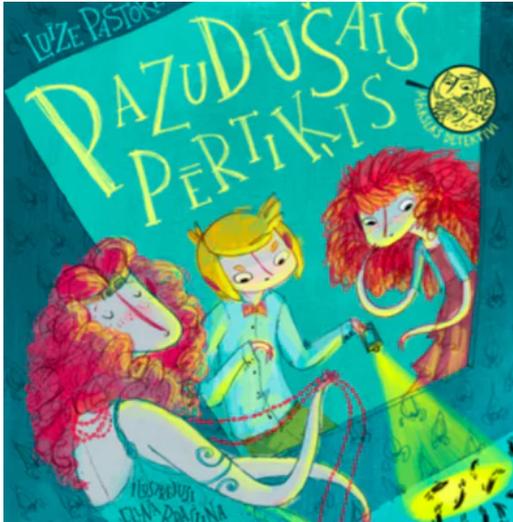


Home

Discover

Shop for Books

About Us



## Latvian Children's Author Luīze Pastore on Talking Dogs, Art Detectives and More



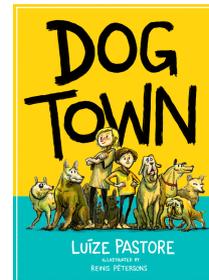
By [Olivia Snajje](#)  
April 24, 2018

Wit



*What Jacob wanted most of all was for an enormous one-eyed comet to crash down onto the city.*

So begins [Dog Town](#), a tale for 8-12 year olds, and Latvian author [Luīze Pastore](#)'s debut in English. But Pastore is a seasoned writer in Latvia, where she has been publishing children's books for ten years now. She began writing as a child, and first dabbled in poetry and fiction but felt that writing for children was what worked best for her. Since then, her numerous books for children include the very successful educational series dubbed "Art Detectives", which involve a girl, a boy, and a dachshund, who uncover the history of Latvian art and artists.



Pastore was recently in London for the launch of *Dog Town*, which has been adapted as an animated feature film called *Jacob, Mimi and the Talking Dogs*, to be released in late 2018. Illustrated by Reinis Pētersons and translated by Žanete Vēvere Pasqualini, *Dog Town* is the story of a

young boy Jacob, who lives alone with his father, but is sent to live temporarily with his cousin Mimi in the run-down area of Maskachka, in Riga. Jacob and Mimi end up fighting to preserve her neighborhood from evil developers, helped by a gang of talking dogs. Both Jacob and Mimi live with their fathers, which is a reference to the 2008 recession in Latvia. Most people were looking for a job outside of a Latvia, said Pastore, and in *Dog Town* Jacob and Mimi's mothers are working abroad. "In reality both parents would go away and the kids would live with their grandparents," she commented.



Luīze Pastore

Published in Latvia in 2013 and originally called *A Tale of the Maskachka District*, the Riga neighborhood was inspirational for Pastore because she went there regularly for four years when she was a student at the Latvian Academy of Culture, part of Latvia University.

"Everyone was afraid of going there, but actually the people living there were more afraid of us," said Pastore, in a recent interview. "The stray dogs ruled the neighborhood like the mafia. They could tell the difference between posh cars and neighborhood cars, and they hated the posh cars. There is a real sense of community; it is very mixed, with Russians, Latvians and gypsies. I wanted to write about this neighborhood, I walked around a lot and observed people and dogs and in the book the main characters are people I saw."

Once the book was published, Pastore presented it to several libraries in the neighborhood and "they loved it."

Working on events in libraries and schools is something Pastore does often, because part of her inspiration as a writer "is to make boys read. When I travel around Latvia I go to state funded events at local libraries in rural areas. I go to schools and libraries. Boys tell me they don't read. In

the first row there are always the boys who have been punished by the teacher. Then they see I'm a young woman and they start to be ok with that. I don't read in front of them but I say 'we're going to play a game.' I start with a series on art detectives. It has lots of text. They have to read to play the game. Then they start to read the text. I try to trick them into reading."

Pastore is referring to her series of books about art, which involves getting children interested, via her characters and their adventures, in an artist, and a single work of their art. The books are illustrated by the talented [Elina Braslina](#) who is currently collaborating with Pastore on a new book about Mark Rothko, who was born in Daugavpils, in southeastern Latvia. Pastore is working on cooperating with the Rothko family, and the Tate museum on the project. He is the first international artist she's dealt with and the subject is "more complicated because it's abstract art and he talks about depression and melancholy. I want to write about these emotions because my characters are growing up, even the dachshund is getting old, he has grey fur now." said Pastore. "They started out as 7-year-olds and now they are nearly teenagers. Their first feelings as teenagers will appear in this book."

Pastore likes to set her books in the present, because "the stereotype is that we are always focusing on the Soviet occupation. The big challenge is to show who we are right now. We are searching for our identity, and I like to look forward rather than always being attached to history. Of course history is important as well, but children's book authors can play a role in looking ahead."

Pastore says she is lucky to have been born in a "free country". Her mother was a schoolteacher during the Soviet occupation and her father worked in an agricultural collective. Once Latvia became independent, "all the literature that was forbidden became accessible." Pastore grew up reading Astrid Lindgren, and Tove Jansson, among others. Like many Latvian children, she also read a lot of poetry. Now, "when ideas come to me I don't think about whether or not they are locally based. One of my next stories is set in the jungle in Venezuela."

Pastore's book is based on the Latvian-born explorer Aleksandrs Laime, who discovered Angel Falls in Venezuela, the highest uninterrupted waterfall in the world.

Pastore hasn't entirely forgotten history here, but hers is a modern take on it, with Laime's children observing their father as an obsessive explorer and gold prospector.

She recently made a game involving a treasure map for a museum, which the museum gives out free to children, and she says she'd love to work on a similar app.

So many projects..." said Pastore, enthusiastically.

*Banner book cover illustrations by Elina Braslina*

**Tags**

- childrens literature
- reinis pētersons
- bookwitty interviews
- dogtown
- latvian books for kids
- luīze pastore



**Olivia Snaije**

Olivia is a journalist and editor and manages the editorial content for Bookwitty in English. She is based in Paris.

**Found this article relevant?**

[Wit](#)

**Related Books**

Do you know any books that are similar to this one?

[Link a Book](#)

**Comments**



Write a comment

**3 Related Posts**



Olivia Snaije  
1 month ago

