

HENNING
MANKELL

WHEN
THE
SNOW
FELL



When the Snow Fell, Henning Mankell, Random House LLC, 2011, 0440240441, 9780440240440, 247 pages. As it has in the past, the first snow of the year signifies to Joel Gustafson his very own New Year's Eve. So when the snow begins to fall on a cold November day, Joel gets busy making resolutions--three to be exact. Resolution #1: Live to be at least a hundred. He realizes that this will require toughening himself up by testing his physical limits. Resolution #2: Set his eyes on the sea for the first time. To do this, Joel knows he needs to help sort out his father Samuel's problems and get him back to the life he left behind--being a sailor at sea. Resolution #3: See a naked lady. At almost fourteen, Joel feels he needs to see the world--including females--in an entirely different light. As the winter days pass, life becomes ever more complicated, but Joel is determined to keep his resolutions--for his father, for himself, and for their future. When the Snow Fell follows Joel's journey as he realizes along the way that it will require determination, strength, and valor in order to truly become a young man..

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Rain , Kate Le Vann, Aug 20, 2008, , 218 pages. Rain's father has to go on a research trip, so Rain goes to her grandmother's in London for the summer. She finds an old diary and discovers her mother was pregnant with her

The East Side Bullies , Jerry B. Jenkins, 1996, Fiction, 107 pages. The Kalamazoo County junior deputies are in big trouble when a gang of older boys decide to make life miserable for them..

The Greatest Man in Cedar Hole A Novel, Stephanie Doyon, Jun 21, 2005, Fiction, 384 pages. Raised to the stature of a leading citizen when a rival dies unexpectedly, Spud Pinkham struggles to earn the respect of his family and apathetic neighbors, from an embittered

Shadow of the Leopard , Henning Mankell, Aug 20, 2009, , 177 pages. Sofia, who lost her legs as a child in the author's Secrets in the Fire, is now grown up with children in Mozambique, but her family life is not idyllic, especially when she

The Best Single Mom in the World How I was Adopted, , 2001, Juvenile Nonfiction, 32 pages. A girl tells how her mother decided to become a single parent and traveled overseas to adopt her and describes their happy life as a family..

The Galapagos Islands , Charles Darwin, Janet Browne, Michael Neue, Aug 1, 1996, Literary Criticism, 64 pages. .

Italian Shoes , Henning Mankell, 2010, Fiction, 247 pages. Reclusive surgeon Fredrik Welin's island solitude is disturbed by a visit from a former lover who forces him to confront his past..

The Troubled Man , Henning Mankell, Feb 1, 2012, Detective and mystery stories, 501 pages. Every morning Håkan von Enke takes a walk in the forest near his apartment in Stockholm. Then, one day he fails to come home. Detective Kurt Wallander is not officially involved

Second Chances , Andi Mcwhorter, Dec 21, 2009, Fiction, . .

A Time to Choose , Martha Attema, 1995, , 166 pages. When sixteen-year-old Johannes' father collaborates with the Germans in Nazi occupied Holland, he makes his own decision and joins the Dutch resistance movement..

The Real Question , Adrian Fogelin, Sep 1, 2009, Juvenile Fiction, 234 pages. Fisher Brown, a sixteen-year-old over-achiever, is on the verge of academic burnout when he impulsively decides to stop cramming for the SATs for one weekend and accompany his

The third in the trilogy about Joel, a 12 year old boy in rural 1950's Sweden (Mankell himself??). This continued to be an odd series from the start to the finish. Joel is not all that likable, nor is his

father a model parent (by any means)--in this one he starts to proposition women, and seeing his father as competition. His father also lapses into drinking in this one, and you start to see why Joel has this pseudo-adult persona--he had to take it on. I liked this series over all but I would n...more The third in the trilogy about Joel, a 12 year old boy in rural 1950's Sweden (Mankell himself??). This continued to be an odd series from the start to the finish. Joel is not all that likable, nor is his father a model parent (by any means)--in this one he starts to proposition women, and seeing his father as competition. His father also lapses into drinking in this one, and you start to see why Joel has this pseudo-adult persona--he had to take it on. I liked this series over all but I would not recommend it for children. Too bleak.(less)

Henning Mankell, the successful adult mystery writer, is trying his hand at the lucrative young adult market. While the writing in *When Snow Fell* is evocative and beautiful, it is hard to imagine young readers engaging with this book. Additionally, the setting is the 1950s in a small town in northern Sweden, not a sure-fire attention grabber. Thirteen-year-old Joel Gustafson celebrates his own personal New Year's Eve when the first snowfall of winter comes with resolutions and all. As always, th...more Henning Mankell, the successful adult mystery writer, is trying his hand at the lucrative young adult market. While the writing in *When Snow Fell* is evocative and beautiful, it is hard to imagine young readers engaging with this book. Additionally, the setting is the 1950s in a small town in northern Sweden, not a sure-fire attention grabber. Thirteen-year-old Joel Gustafson celebrates his own personal New Year's Eve when the first snowfall of winter comes with resolutions and all. As always, this year's snowfall took him by surprise and he sets out to make his resolutions: to live to be a hundred years old which will require him to toughen himself up; to see the sea for the first time; and to see a lady naked. The rest of the book consists of Joel's adventures in trying to fulfill his resolutions. The book is a mix of the melancholic and laugh-out-loud funny, especially Joel's exploits to see the young shop assistant, Sonja Mattsson in transparent veils like Salome. Joel is his own mum and takes care of his father since Mummy Jenny left and his father is prone to go on drinking binges. This book might be appropriate for students who like good writing and quiet stories.(less)

Thirteen-year-old Jacob lives in small-town 1950s Sweden with his father, a sailor turned logger, in this coming-of-age tale. Jacob is forced to be his "own mother," as he puts it, responsible for the shopping, cooking, and cleaning, as his mother left several years ago. By the end of the story, Jacob has learned a bit about growing up, and a bit about how to still be a kid. Very well written, though the translator's choices seemed odd at some points.

Life keeps getting in the way, however, of him reaching his goals. His father is a lumberjack who goes on drinking binges and seems unhappy with life. His mother abandoned them years ago. To add to his plate, he's trying to navigate girls, first kisses, bullies,...more Reviewed by Kira M for TeensReadToo.com

I have been reading a few books from Swedish authors. This is a young adult book, imaginative and dark with the central character seeming more innocent than I expect a thirteen year old to be. Like me he was born in 1945. I also read *Italian Shoes* by Henning Mankell, a story about an isolated retired doctor. Mankell gives a good sense of location and creates vivid characters.

Nicely written coming of age story about a boy in Northern Sweden who has in many ways already grown-up, as he tries to understand the crazy adults who make up his world and his growing curiosity about sex. Definitely not an adventure story, unless your adventures involve lots of snow. Has a similar feel to *My Life As A Dog*.

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Grade 7–9—While this is a companion to *A Bridge to the Stars* (2007) and *Shadows in the Twilight* (2008, both Delacorte), it is not necessary to have read those novels to understand the action and characters in this story. Joel, 14, is certain of two things: life gets more complicated over time, and winter always arrives unexpectedly. With the New Year approaching, he visits a graveyard to make three resolutions: to live to be 100 years old, to see the sea for the first time, and to see a naked woman. Enduring a winter night outside, trying to find a way to move away from his slowly decaying town, and seeking out the new shopkeeper's assistant are only a few incidents that follow. An awkward encounter with a classmate brings intense embarrassment, which is followed quickly by Joel's heralded heroic actions in an unrelated event. At times as spare and chilly as the Swedish winter, this book is an affecting portrayal of a young man's maturation and the difficulties of a troubled father-son relationship. Although the story is set in 1950s rural Sweden, readers will relate to Joel's mixed feelings about his father, his budding sexuality, and the fluidity of the humiliation and admiration that are bestowed upon Joel by his peers. Admittedly, the book's audience might be limited to mature and thoughtful readers who don't need constant action to keep the pages turning, but libraries that hold Mankell's related titles will want to add this one.—Jennifer Schultz, Fauquier County Public Library, Warrenton, VA

Joel Gustafsson, the protagonist of Mr. Mankell's books for young people, is now about to be fourteen, still lives with his father Samuel in cold Sweden, but strange things are happening to his body, although not always fast enough. He is embarrassed about his voice, for instance, which is prone to be shrill. Joel longs to live to be one hundred, see the sea and most importantly-- at least it is what he obsesses most about because of his raging hormones-- see a naked woman. He still wishes his father were a glamorous sailor, as he once was, rather than a lackluster lumberjack, but he misses his run-away mom less and less.

In addition to all the problems that come with being thirteen and in school, Joel also does the grocery shopping, sometimes does the cooking for him and his dad, functioning as his own mom. All too often, however, he serves as the parent to his father, having to go searching for him when he finds him missing from home, knowing that he will find Samuel with drinking companions and will have to bring him home, inebriated, and put him to bed.

Joel in both his awkwardness and sexual awakening becomes every teenager. He is shy and awkward in the presence of the opposite sex, is convinced his father and other adults do not understand him, is afraid of what his life will be like as an adult, does not understand the mystery of death, and cannot wait to fly from the parental nest.

Joel Gustafson, the protagonist of two previous novels by Swedish author Henning Mankell (*A BRIDGE TO THE STARS* and *SHADOWS IN THE TWILIGHT*), is growing up. He's 14 now, and starting to realize that there are both good and bad things that come with getting older. As the book opens, he's about to make his New Year's resolutions --- very solemnly in a churchyard at midnight --- and his resolutions (like most) are pretty telling. For one thing, he wants to make himself strong enough to live until he's 100, a feat he intends to accomplish in part by toughening himself up by sleeping outdoors even in the brutal winter nights in northern Sweden. He also plans to help make enough money so that he and his dad, a former sailor longing to return to the crisp blue waves, can move closer to the ocean. And, most importantly, he resolves to see a real-live naked woman.

Joel's perplexities about girls and women --- he likes to watch them from a distance but is tongue-tied and shy in real life --- are representative of his ever-increasing awkwardness and uncertainty about growing up. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his shifting relationship with his friend Gertrud, a young woman who lost her nose after a surgical mistake. Gertrud is mocked and ostracized by others in their small town, but Joel has always been kind to her --- until he lashes out at her in a rage that even he doesn't understand. Meanwhile, he's growing increasingly fascinated by the young new salesclerk at the local market, whom he is sure will become the naked woman of his imaginations and resolutions.

The story tells of Joels daily life which revolves around his desire to implement his new year

resolutions. To move away he will need money and he knows two ways of making it, selling caravans or becoming a rock star, now which will be the easiest.....How can he make his body tougher..... and which girl shall he choose and how will he persuade her.....

Joel is growing up. He is getting interested in girls. Just look at his New Year's resolutions: to see a naked lady, to toughen himself up so that he can live to be a hundred, and to see the sea. They all look pretty impossible for a motherless boy in Northern Sweden. Especially as his sailor dad is keen to drown his sadness in drink, and all the local matrons are narrowly watching the pair of them. And then he saves old Simon from a frozen death in the woods, and Joel becomes a local hero.

The problem was that you couldn't hear it snowing. It was different with rain. Rain pattered onto the corrugated iron roof over the cycle rack outside the front door. When the sun shone you couldn't hear that either, but the light changed. Wind was easiest of all. Sometimes when it was blowing really hard, it would whip into the walls so fiercely that it felt as if the house was about to take off.

Joel continued gazing out the window. So winter had arrived now. There was no getting away from it. And he'd been fooled again. Would it be a long, cold winter? The snow that had fallen now would stay the longest. Because it would be underneath all the snow that came later. The first to come was the last to thaw. And that would be at the end of April, or even the beginning of May.

It was cold on the floor. Joel fetched a pillow from his bed and put it under his feet. He could hear his dad clattering about in the kitchen with the coffeepot. Samuel didn't like Joel standing on his pillow, so he would have to be ready to move away smartly from the window if the door suddenly opened behind him. But Samuel rarely came into Joel's bedroom in the morning. There was a risk, but not much of one.

Joel thought about the previous evening. It had still been autumn then. After dinner he had pulled on his boots, grabbed hold of his jacket and leapt downstairs in three jumps. As it was a Sunday evening, the night train heading south stopped at the local railway station. It was rare for anybody to go aboard. And even rarer for anybody to get off. But you never knew. Besides, Joel used to slip little secret letters into the postbox in the mail coach.

Joel thought that there might be an address like that somewhere in the world. But as he also suspected that the post office had secret employees who spent all day and night tracing people who sent letters to invented addresses, he didn't dare to use the names of towns that really existed. And so he would study the latest issue of *Where When How* in the school library. That was an annual that listed things that had happened the previous year. Right at the back was a list of all the towns and villages in Sweden. It told you which places had grown bigger and which ones had become smaller. The little town where Joel lived always grew smaller every year. That confirmed Joel's suspicions. Nobody wanted to carry on living here. Nor did anybody want to move here.

He never stuck stamps on the envelopes. He drew them on instead. Old men with long noses. As the letters were fakes, he didn't think it was right to use genuine postage stamps. And then he had to be careful when he slipped them into the postbox on the mail coach. Stationmaster Knif had sharp eyes, and was apt to flare up and lose his temper. But Joel hadn't been found out so far. He'd written in his notebook that he had now sent eleven letters in all with the southbound express train.

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Internationally acclaimed author Henning Mankell has written eleven Kurt Wallander mysteries. The books have been published in forty countries and consistently top the bestseller lists in Europe, receiving major literary prizes (including the UK's Golden Dagger for *Sidetracked*) and generating numerous international film and television adaptations. He has also published many other novels for children, teens, and adults. In addition, he is one of Sweden's most popular dramatists.

Meanwhile, Joel is learning that growing up also means new, unwelcome responsibilities at home. His father, Samuel, has just been dumped by his long-time girlfriend, Sara, and he has returned to the heavy drinking and self-destructive behavior that characterized his life before she came along. Now, though, Joel feels a compulsion both to help his father and avoid the embarrassment that accompanies his public intoxication.

While this sense of responsibility is heightening as he grows up, his endearing imagination and fancifulness, as well as his sensitivity, remain. "To grow up is to wonder about things," Joel thinks to himself, "To be grown up is to slowly forget the things you wondered about as a child. He has realized this. And he doesn't want to become a grown-up like that." For many readers, Joel's thoughtfulness and quiet fancies are his most sympathetic qualities; they will be reassured that, as he grows up, he seems determined to preserve that part of his nature.

Like Mankell's other novels about Joel Gustafson, *WHEN THE SNOW FELL* is primarily about Joel's inner life, despite the adventures and outrageous situations he sometimes finds himself in. Thoughtful readers who enjoy considering things the way Joel does will continue to appreciate this series and likely will be surprised by the new directions hinted at in the novel's final chapters. These directions will be explored further in the next book about Joel and his father, due to be published in English in 2010.

Joel Gustafson celebrates New Year's on the first day of snowfall rather than being tied to a calendar. The resolutions that he makes in the church graveyard at the stroke of midnight include the following: live to be 100 years old, which will require toughening himself up; solve his father's "big problem," namely that he is a lumberjack but was meant to be a sailor; and, finally, see a naked woman. He manages the third resolution in the course of this sequel to *A Bridge to the Stars and Shadows in the Twilight*, but readers will have to wait and see about the other two. Thirteen year old Joel has more on his plate than one would wish; his mom abandoned the family years ago, and his dad is prone to drinking binges, straining further their meager income. But he also has more typical problems—negotiating his first kiss, not liking school very much, and having a crush on an older woman. He becomes a hero in his small Swedish village when he saves an old man from freezing to death, but the man eventually dies anyway and that typifies the tenor of this tale. This is a very slow paced book with much of the story taking place in Joel's head and in small deeds; hence, it is potentially limited in appeal among the age group targeted. Thoughtful, compassionate, and introspective, Joel may be a character that appeals more to girls. Reviewer: Paula McMillen, Ph.D.

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