

Poland (Language of translation: Polish)

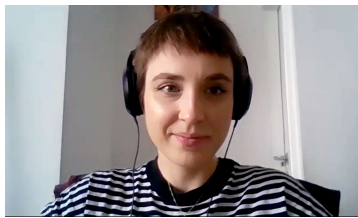
Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry

Since 2006, Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry (Two Sisters Publishing House) has been publishing books for children and teenagers under the slogan "Education through Play." From reprinting classic Polish children's books to translating new picture books from around the world, it has earned national and international acclaim for book production that unites the highest quality text and graphic design. The publishing house has received many national and international awards, including awards for children's books from the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and the Bologna Prize for the Best Children's Publishers of the Year.

Website: <https://wydawnictwodwiesiostry.pl/>

■ Projects supported by Japan Foundation grants

2020 *Z pozdrowieniami, Żyrafa* (*Boku wa Afurika ni sumu kirin to iimasu; Yours Sincerely, Giraffe*), by Iwasa Megumi (illustrated by Takabatake Jun)



All books in the series will be translated and the illustrator will be Jörg Mühle, who is popular with children in Poland

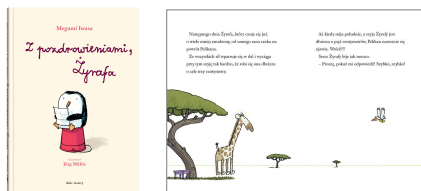
Justyna Karpinska, Foreign rights

You publish a lot of children's books every year. Are many of these translated works?

We publish cookbooks, picture books for adults, and classic literature too, but ever since the company was founded, our main focus has been on children's books. We do handle some works originally written in Polish, but we're distinctive in that we handle a large number of translated works, which account for about three-quarters of our total sales. We have translated and published two Japanese books to date.

Our company's founder originally felt that there was a lack of quality children's books on the Polish market. There was an evident need for more classic, traditional, and high quality products. There were also two major developments in the Polish publishing industry at the time. The first was a movement to re-publish and revive classic Polish works that were no longer being published and had been forgotten by the public, such as works from the 1960s, when illustrators were very active in Poland. The second was a movement to introduce world-acclaimed works that had not been introduced to Poland.

In 2006, Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry was born as a place to pursue these two ideals and realize the hopes of its founder.



Polish edition of Iwasa Megumi's *Boku wa Afurika ni sumu kirin to iimasu* (*Yours Sincerely, Giraffe*).

Illustrations by Jörg Mühle

Viele Grüße, Deine Giraffe, the German edition of *Yours Sincerely, Giraffe* won the children's book category of the German Children's Literature Award in 2018, but how did you come across this work, how did you translate it, and how was it published?

I first learned about *Giraffe* from information about the illustrator's work. The German edition of the book was illustrated by a German, Jörg Mühle, who is also popular in Poland.

We have always maintained a good relationship with Japanese publishers and agencies, which has really facilitated our work.

The Polish translator of *Giraffe* was Anna Zalewska, a Japan scholar and expert on the Japanese language and culture. She didn't follow the procedure of translating from another language; she translated it directly into Polish from Japanese. Japanese literature is becoming more popular in Poland, so some publishers may be having difficulty finding translators.

The Polish version uses the same illustrations as the German version, doesn't it?

Illustrations are very important for children's books, so we think about them carefully. For *Giraffe*, I really liked the original Japanese illustrations, but the illustrator of the German edition who introduced me to this work is quite popular in Poland, and I thought that using his illustrations would be more familiar to readers and would sell better. They ended up being very popular with children.

The first Japanese picture book we published was *Małenki król* (*Chīsana ōsama; The Tiny King*), by Miura Taro, for which we used the original Japanese illustrations.



Polish edition of Miura Taro's *Chīsana ōsama* (*The Tiny King*)

How did readers respond to *Zpозdrowieniami, Żyrafa?* I understand you also held some events.

I think the idea of a Japanese children's book being translated and published in Poland was accepted very naturally by our readers, since we've been publishing books from a variety of countries.

We're constantly holding various events related to our books. For example, we have programs for library workers and teachers in which we say, "Here are the kind of books we have. How can we engage children with these books?" We also hold online events, events at bookstores in the city, and so on.

For *Giraffe*, we held an event for children. The idea was that after reading the book, the children could write a letter to a friend who did not know what he or she looked like. The book is very witty and enjoyable, and children have responded to it well. We hope to translate and publish all six books in this series. We're working on the second book at the moment.

Is there anything you would like to realize in the future?

I'd love it if we could invite authors to Poland when we publish their work; not only this book, but other publications, too. In the past, we've invited authors to participate in book fairs and other events held in Krakow, where they interacted with children and gave various interviews during their stay. Interaction between authors and readers is really important. It would provide fantastic opportunities if we could invite Japanese authors to participate in various events, such as book fairs in Warsaw and Krakow, interviews, interactions with children, book signings, lectures, and so on.

The national character of Poland cherishes books and literature, but in the last 10 years we've seen subtle changes in the way people approach books, and I feel that readers are demanding higher-quality books now. Regardless of the size of the publishing house, there is an emerging emphasis on more carefully crafted books. In order to meet this demand, we hope to continue our efforts to produce more carefully crafted books and to share more diverse, high-quality works, including Japanese works, in Poland.

(Interview recorded February 15, 2022)
Photos courtesy of: Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry