

Works reviewed

Retrat d'un assassí d'ocells (The Portrait of a Bird Killer), 1998

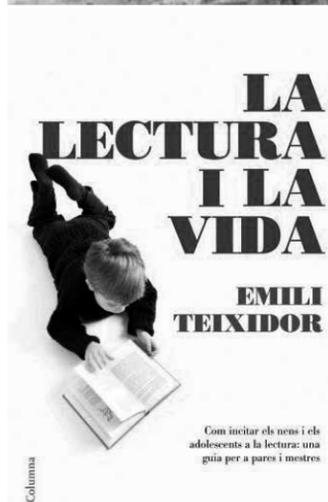
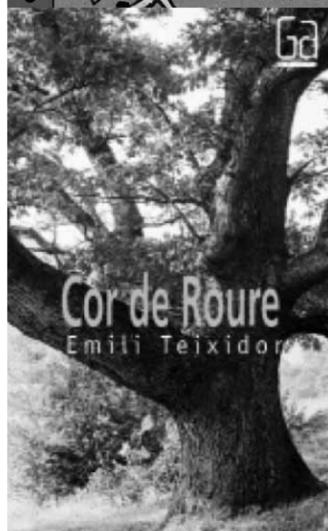
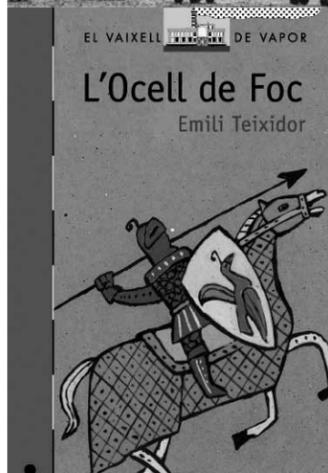
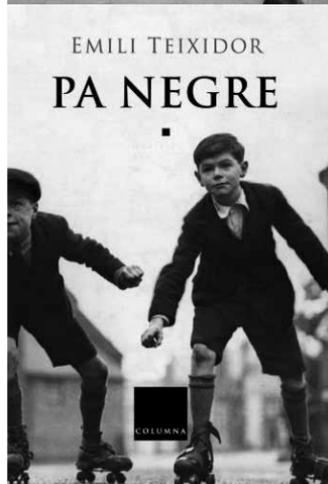
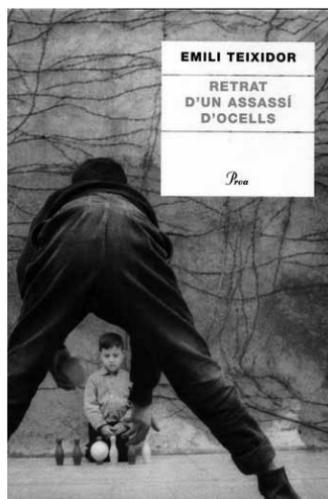
Two bodies in the forest, a hand buried among the flowers and the legend of a man barbarously mutilated are the framework of Emili Teixidor's first novel, a heart moving remembrance of an enigmatic paradise recalled from childhood. The narrator embarks, in the same way as someone who undertakes a police investigation, on the adventure of reconstructing lost time from childhood and youth without letting himself be dragged down by nostalgia. He adopts the stance of a detective returning to the scene of a crime and doing his best to fit the evidence together so as to make sense. After all, isn't that how we build up our own story, starting from the rubble in our memory, the significance of which often escapes us? Evocation leads the narrator to discover up to what point he has been the innocent, involuntary witness to the crudest fight for power, whereby at the end of his research, when meaning has been totally discovered, he finds himself pushed towards the despair of absurdity and guilt. An outstanding feature of *Retrat d'un assassí d'ocells* (Portrait of a Bird Killer) is the wealth of expression and the kaleidoscope of characters that bring to life a definite time and space, the region of Osona after the Spanish civil war, with a mythical tone belonging to great works of universal literature. By means of this book, which develops subjects, characters and situations appearing in the stories *Sic transit Glòria Swanson* (this is his first novel not intended for children or young-adults), Teixidor is revealed to be an ambitious, powerful novelist, a must.

Pa negre (Black Bread), 2003

Pa negre (Black Bread) is set in the harsh nineteen forties of post-war Spain, in a misty atmosphere and in the tone of an industrial and rural drama. A drama which intertwines personal memories, history and terrible legends collected from here and there. Emili Teixidor chooses to adopt Andreu's point of view as narrator, an innocent, unconscious narrator, who lives practically on his own, his father is in prison and his mother at work in the factory from dawn to dusk. The boy is trying to find a place of refuge in the world that surrounds him and in which he has had the dubious luck of having been fostered by the Manubens family, the owners of the factory. Through Andreu, he constructs a mythical territory that is not only the geographical area of Osona, but above all the moral space of a child who is on the threshold of the adult world, the moral space of an adolescent, the space of initiation in life, in its secrets and its mysteries, the space of renunciation and betrayal. It is clear from the first page the essential, basic role that language plays in the development of the protagonist during his process of moral growth. By means of a veritable torrent of words, Teixidor recreates the inevitably happy world of childhood. Happy, but at the same time composed of a dark, brutal, and at times sordid sadness. Such is the discovery of reality, which means injustice, the bitter truth. *Pa negre* (Black Bread) is an outstanding novel, an exercise in creating a world on the basis of the recreation of memories and language, without concessions, but also without stridency, profoundly generous to the readers.

L'Ocell de Foc (The Firebird), 1969

L'Ocell de Foc (The Firebird) travels along the roads of Provence, guiding the Cec de Cabrera (the Blind man from Cabrera) at the head of a troop of actors. We are in the times of the childhood of King James I and the crusade against the Cathars, when Europe was a perilous crossing of paths and of languages in the throes of liberty. Our protagonist, an apprentice troubadour, discovers the profession of knights, the monastic life, the mysteries of wizards and highwaymen, and behind the enigma of self identity, his true destiny. Teixidor has an outstanding skill at combining a tale of adventures in the best tradition of



young people's novels with a historical introduction to the world of feudalism, and through the ups and downs of the minstrels and troubadours, a short initiation into poetry. The Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation included this novel, recommended for twelve-year-old readers on, in their selection of a hundred books from the 20th century.

Cor de Roure (Heart of Oak), 1994

Cor de Roure is the name of warrior during the Guerra dels Matiners (the War of the Early Risers) which rallied over a hundred and fifty men to fight for Charles VI against his cousin, Queen Isabel II. Set at the end of the 19th century, within the context of the Carlist Wars, the novel relives the tensions between traditionalists and liberals which configured modern Spain, the clash between popular superstition and the enlightened belief in science, the unstoppable social transformation brought about by the industrial revolution experienced in the Ter and Llobregat basins. A historical novel knowledgeably documented, it is intended for readers between fourteen and sixteen as a story of adventure and intrigue in which two adolescents, a boy and a girl, Tinoc and Viana, find friendship, love and self identity in the midst of an extremely complex situation. In this way they will be initiated in the secrets of life, along with the reader.

La lectura y la vida (Reading and Life), 2007

A book that gathers ten essays, articles and lectures under the sub-title of *Com incitar els nens i els adolescents a la lectura: una guia per a pares i mestres* (How to Entice Children and Adolescents into Reading: A Guide for Parents and Teachers). Teixidor's pedagogic experience and his knowledge as an accomplished narrator used to talking to children and adolescents about his books are the basis of this collection of reflexions giving clues on teaching to read and stimulating the desire to do so. Teixidor shows an elevated practical sense, with a display of advice and strategies that are worth copying, aimed at the professionals of reading initiation, at schools and libraries and also at families. Along similar lines to those of Lewis, Steiner or Bloom, the author reminds us that books, in as far as they are word depots, are the memory of the world, the threshold of dialogue with the dead and with imaginary reality. And he proves it, passionately, from the firm conviction that literary reading is a gift which helps us add value to life.

Les històries de la formiga Piga (The Stories of Piga the Ant), 1996 - 2010

Emili Teixidor has written a variety of children's novels, such as those featuring Ranquet, the stories of Ring 1-2-3 illustrated by Philip Stanton, or the cases of Inspector Garrofa. Perhaps the most famous of all are the series of children's stories portrayed by a friendly ant and her adventures which instruct the youngest readers in values such as friendship, solidarity or amusement, which is not only characteristic of cicadas. There have been eight books up until now, all with playful titles: *L'amiga més amiga de la formiga Piga* (Piga the Ant's Very Best Friend), *La formiga Piga es deslloriga* (Piga the Ant Dislocates Herself), *Petits contes d'intriga de la formiga Piga* (Short Tales of Intrigue about Piga the Ant), *La volta al món de la formiga Piga* (Around the World with Piga the Ant), *Els secrets de la vida de la formiga Piga* (The Secrets of the Life of Piga the Ant), *La formiga Piga lliga* (Piga the Ant Flirts), *La botiga de la Formiga Piga* (Piga the Ant's Shop), *La formiga Piga s'enfonsa en la història* (Piga the Ant Sinks into History), all of them have been translated into Spanish. In 1996 the stories of Piga the Ant earned Teixidor the Spanish Ministry of Culture Award and international recognition by the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People).