MAURICE SENDAK
LAUREATE 2003

Maurice Sendak is the modern picture-book’s portal figure. He is unparalleled in developing the picture-book’s unique possibilities of narrating – to the joy of constant new picture-book illustrators. Furthermore, he is one of the most courageous researchers of the most secret recesses of childhood – to the delight of constant new readers.

Jury citation


Sendak was born in a poor emigrant family from Poland. The Holocaust during World War II has made a profound impression on his work. Maurice Sendak’s major breakthrough was Where the Wild Things Are, 1963, where he all at once revolutionised the entire picture book narrative. Unlike any other contemporary picture book artist, he changed the entire landscape of the modern picture book – thematically, aesthetically and psychologically. Primarily it is in the dozen or so books that Sendak has both written and illustrated, where he penetrates the most secret recesses of childhood.

The visual expression of a child’s inner landscape, which one already meets in Where the Wild Things Are, became Sendak’s hallmark even in In the Night Kitchen, 1970 and Outside Over There, 1981.

As an illustrator of other people’s texts, e.g. of children’s books by George MacDonald, Randall Jarrell and Meindert DeJong, Sendak demonstrated in a wonderful way how pictures can emphasize new meanings of a text. He received a spate of awards, including two Caldecott Medals (1964 and 1974) and the Hans Christian Andersen Medal from IBBY (1970).
Christine Nöstlinger is a reliably bad child-rearing influence of the same calibre as Astrid Lindgren. Her diversified and highly committed authorship is characterized by disrespectful humour, clear-sighted solemnity and inconspicuous warmth. She is a staunch supporter of children and those living on the margin of society.

Jury citation

Austrian author, born in Vienna on 13 October, 1936.

Nöstlinger’s books, which are written for children of all ages, range from imaginative stories to realistic descriptions of everyday life. They also include stories of a retrospective character, and reflect many children’s current reality with little money, broken families and school bullies. Her special tone of voice is humorous; free of illusions and sentimentality; unobtrusive and loving. Nöstlinger’s first book, Die feuerrote Friederike (Fiery Frederica) which she illustrated herself, was published in 1970.


In the last decade, Nöstlinger has primarily written books for younger children, including two series, one about a boy, Franz (started in 1984) and the other about a girl, Mini (from 1992). Christine Nöstlinger has been awarded Friedrich Boedecker Prize (1972), German Youth Literature Prize (1973), Hans Christian Andersen Medal from the IBBY (1984) as well as close to thirty other awards and citations.
Lygia Bojunga dissolves the boundaries between fantasy and reality with all the exhilarating ease of a child at play. In her dramatic and word of mouth-style narratives the reader is always enabled to enter directly into the dreams and fantasies that her principal characters draw on for survival. In a deeply original way she fuses playfulness, poetic beauty and absurd humour with social critique, a love of freedom and a strong empathy with the vulnerable child.

Jury citation

Brazilian author, better known as Lygia Bojunga Nunes. Born in Pelotas, 1932.

Bojunga is part of the tradition of magical realism and fantasy-filled storytelling of South America, a tradition she has developed and perfected. In her word of mouth-style narratives, characterised by a strongly dramatic presence, anything can happen. In a deeply original way she fuses playfulness, poetic beauty and absurd humour with social critique, a love of freedom and a strong empathy with the vulnerable child. Fantasy often functions as a way of dealing with distressing personal experiences, or as an escape from harsh reality. Bojunga enables the reader to enter directly into the dreams of her principal characters and to share in their experiences.

Bojunga’s work has been translated into a number of languages including English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic, Bulgarian, Czech and Hebrew. She has won a number of awards, including the Jabuti Award (1973), the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Award (1982), and the Rattenfänger Literaturpreis (1986).
Philip Pullman is a master storyteller in a number of genres – from historical novels and fantasy to social realism and highly amusing parodies. With inventiveness, linguistic brilliance and psychological insight he creates and explores his own worlds without losing focus on here and now. Through his strong characters he stands firmly on the side of young people, ruthlessly questioning authority and proclaiming humanism and the power of love whilst maintaining an optimistic belief in the child even in the darkest of situations.

Jury citation


Philip Pullman is best known for his fantasy trilogy His Dark Materials, yet his work covers a number of other genres. Pullman radically injects new life into fantasy by introducing a variety of alternative worlds and by allowing good and evil to become ambiguous. His historical Sally Lockhart thrillers are set in Victorian England, and present a young woman of unusual strength and independence – qualities also characteristic of his other heroines, not least Lyra in His Dark Materials.

Pullman has also written contemporary realistic novel for young people, and a number of skilfully retold fairy tales, often in parody form. In each of these genres he combines storytelling and psychological insight of the highest order. The recipient of numerous awards, Philip Pullman was the first ever writer of literature for children and young people to win the Whitbread Book of the Year Award in 2001.
Ryôji Arai is an illustrator with a style all of his own: bold, mischievous and unpredictable. His picturebooks glow with warmth, playful good humour and an audacious spontaneity that appeals to children and adults alike. In adventure after adventure, colour flows through his hands in an almost musical way. As a medium for conveying stories to children, his art is at once genuine and truly poetic, encouraging children to paint and to tell their own stories.

Jury citation


Arai studied art at Nippon University. His production of picturebooks is both large and varied – from small books for toddlers, to picturebooks of nonsense, fairytales and poetry, both with his own texts and those of other writers. He has also worked with advertising, magazine illustration and theatre set design.

His illustrated books have won him a number of awards in his native Japan and around the world; the newcomer’s prize Fourth Choice in Japan 1986, the Grand Award for new illustrators 1990, the publisher Shogakkan’s 1997 award for children’s literature for Uso tsuki no tsuki (“The Lying Moon”), the Special Award at the 1999 Bologna Book Fair for Nazo nazo no tabi (“A Journey of Riddles”) together with Chihiro Ishizu, and the 31st picturebook award from the publisher Kodansha for Mori no ehon (“A Forest Picture Book”, 1999) together with the poet Hiroshi Osada.
KATHERINE PATERSO
LAUREATE 2006

Katherine Paterson is a brilliant psychologist who gets right under the skin of the vulnerable young people she creates, whether in historical or exotic settings, or in the grim reality of the USA today. With a deft aesthetic touch she avoids simple solutions, building instead on the inner strength and courage of her main characters.

Jury citation

American author, born in Qing Jiang, Jiangsu, China in 1932.

Paterson grew up in China and trained as a missionary in Japan before beginning her writing career in America with a number of religious textbooks. Paterson’s work has included picture books and books for the very young, often based around fairytales and myths, yet it is as a writer of novels for young readers that she is best known. Often set in historical contexts in Japan, China or the US, yet frequently too against a contemporary American backdrop, these novels deal with important and sometimes difficult issues such as broken families and children at risk. Nonetheless, hope and courage also feature strongly in her works: her main characters are often vulnerable, slightly odd children, a projection of certain aspects of her own childhood.

Paterson’s works have been translated into various languages, including Dutch, French, Finnish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. She has been the recipient of a number of awards, both in her native USA and internationally. These include the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1998 in recognition of her lifetime contributions to children’s literature, the 1986 Grand Prix des Jeunes Lecteurs for Bridge to Terabithia, and the 1977 National Book Award for Children’s Literature for The Master Puppeteer.

In 2010 Katherine Paterson was named National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature.
BANCO DEL LIBRO
LAUREATE 2007

In a true pioneering spirit, with ingenuity and a sheer determination, the Banco del Libro has constantly sought new ways of disseminating books and promoting reading among children in Venezuela. Enthusiasm, professionalism, closeness to the children and a refreshing lack of bureaucracy are the hallmarks of the Banco del Libro’s work, whether in shanty towns, mountain villages, universities or out in cyberspace.

Jury citation


Banco del Libro was set up as a centre for the exchange of textbooks – hence the name, which means Book Bank. Since then, with great creativity and flexibility, Banco del Libro has grown and branched out to promote reading in Venezuela, in every conceivable arena and genre of children’s literature.

For almost half a century, the Banco del Libro, through its many and various projects, has passed on books and stimulated an appetite for reading and writing among countless numbers of children and young people. They have also constructed model libraries, started up school library networks, founded a publishing company specialising in children’s literature and published magazines and other publications. Banco del Libro runs Latin America’s biggest documentation centre for children’s literature and functions as a nursery for young researchers, authors, illustrators and others. The Institution has made a lasting impact on the world of children’s literature in Venezuela, and its work has inspired many successors in Latin America and other parts of the world.

Banco del Libro has received the following awards: IBBY’s ASAHI Reading Promotion Award 1988 and IFLA’s Cuust van Wesemael Award 2003.
Sonya Hartnett is one of the major forces for renewal in modern young adult fiction. With psychological depth and a concealed yet palpable anger, she depicts the circumstances of young people without avoiding the darker sides of life. She does so with linguistic virtuosity and a brilliant narrative technique; her works are a source of strength.

Jury citation

Australian author, born in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 1968.

Sonya Hartnett made her publishing debut at the age of just 15, since when she has written 18 novels for children, young people and adults – although she herself generally prefers not to specify which age group she is writing for. She is one of the authors currently charting a new course in both form and content for teen fiction, bringing it closer to adult fiction and blurring the distinction. She also constantly pushes her own boundaries. No two works are alike. She skilfully adapts her beautiful, precise and illustrative language and her artful narrative technique to the requirements of each novel.

Astrid Lindgren’s works are permeated by an empathy with children living under difficult circumstances. Hartnett’s original and provocative writings take this subject matter into a new era.

Sonya Hartnett has been translated into a number of languages, including Danish, German, Swedish, Italian and Chinese. She has won numerous awards, including the Guardian Children’s Literature Prize in the UK for Thursday’s Child in 2002 and the Children’s Book Council Book of the Year Award for Younger Readers in 2005 for her children’s book The Silver Donkey.
TAMER INSTITUTE
LAUREATE 2009

With perseverance, audacity and resourcefulness, the Tamer Institute has, for two decades, stimulated Palestinian children’s and young adults’ love of reading – and their creativity. Under difficult circumstances, the Institute carries out reading promotion of an unusual breadth and versatility. In the spirit of Astrid Lindgren, the Tamer Institute acknowledges the power of words and the strength of books, stories and imagination as important keys to self-esteem, tolerance and the courage to face life.

Jury citation

Non-for profit organisation based in Ramallah, founded in 1989.

The Tamer Institute for Community Education in Ramallah is an independent organisation that carries out reading promotion work for children and young people in West Bank and Gaza. It was founded to give children access to books and alternative learning as children’s and young people’s schooling, leisure time and lives suffered from the troubles in the area. The Tamer Institute also hands out reading passports. Holders get a stamp for every book they have read. This is a clear symbol of the fact that there are no borders for those who can read books. As Astrid Lindgren said: “Good children’s literature gives the child a place in the world and the world a place in the child”.

The Tamer Institute is the hub of a network that works with writing workshops, storytelling, drama and literary discussion for children and young people. They supply libraries with children’s books and they train librarians and parents.

Despite difficult circumstances, the Tamer Institute works tirelessly on many levels to create a better situation for Palestinian children and young people via literature. Their conviction that words can tear down walls has resulted in innovative reading promotion activities of an unusual breadth, for which reason the Tamer Institute has been awarded the 2009 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.
Kitty Crowther is the master of line but also of atmosphere. She maintains the tradition of the picture book while transforming and renewing it. In her world, the door between imagination and reality is wide open. She addresses the reader gently and personally, but with profound effect. In her deeply felt empathy with people in difficulty, she shows ways in which weakness can be turned into strength. Humanism and sympathy permeate and unify her artistry.

Jury citation

Illustrator from Belgium, born 1970.


She addresses readers personally using a limited repertoire of tools, principal among them pencil, ink and coloured pencils. Facial expressions, posture and atmosphere are captured with unfailing precision. In Kitty Crowther’s world there are no basic stereotypes. The landscapes in which the stories are set resemble the ones we know, but Kitty Crowther sees beyond them to a world richer in possibilities than we imagine.
SHAUN TAN
LAUREATE 2011

Shaun Tan is a masterly visual storyteller, pointing the way ahead to new possibilities for picture books. His pictorial worlds constitute a separate universe where nothing is self-evident and anything is possible. Memories of childhood and adolescence are fixed reference points, but the pictorial narrative is universal and touches everyone, regardless of age. Behind a wealth of minutely detailed pictures, where civilization is criticized and history depicted through symbolism, there is a palpable warmth. People are always present, and Shaun Tan portrays both our searching and our alienation. He combines brilliant, magical narrative skill with deep humanism.

Jury citation

Illustrator and author from Australia, born in 1974.

Shaun Tan has reinvented the picture book by creating visually spectacular pictorial narratives with a constant human presence. He uses a variety of means of artistic expression: lead pencil, Indian ink, coloured pencil, painting and various print techniques. Shaun Tan sees every book as an experiment in visual and verbal storytelling.

Shaun Tan also collaborates on animated film, musical and theatrical adaptations of his works, as well as producing fine art and murals. His works have been translated into more than 10 languages, including German, Swedish, Spanish and Chinese.

Shaun Tan has illustrated more than 20 books, and has received a number of literary awards. 2011 he won the Academy Award Oscar for best animated short film for The Lost Thing, based on his book of the same title.
With an unprejudiced gaze and a sharp intellect, Guus Kuijer portrays both the problems facing contemporary society and life’s big questions. Respect for children is as self-evident in his works as his rejection of intolerance and oppression. Kuijer combines serious subject matter and razor-sharp realism with warmth, subtle humour and visionary flights of fancy. His simple, clear and precise style accommodates both deep philosophical insight and graceful poetic expression.

Jury citation

Author, born in 1942, who lives and works in the Netherlands.

Guus Kuijer made his debut as a children’s author in 1975 and has published over 30 titles, mostly aimed at readers on the cusp of their teenage years. Key works include Het boek van alle dingen (2004, The Book of Everything), Florian Knol (2006) and the series of five books about the girl Polleke.

The uncompromising perspective of the child is always present in Kuijer’s works, but at the same time, through his young protagonists, he paints a perceptive picture of the adult world. His commitment extends to social and religious issues alike, and the consistent message of his books is one of tolerance, understanding and broad-mindedness.

Guus Kuijer has won a number of literary prizes, including the Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis (German Children’s Literature Award) on two occasions. He is a four-time recipient of the Netherlands’ biggest children’s literature prize, the Gouden Griffel (Golden Pencil), and has also received the Staatsprijs voor kinder- en jeugdliteratuur (Dutch National Award for Children’s and Young Adult Literature). His works have been translated into more than 10 languages, including English, Swedish, German, Italian and Japanese.
Isol creates picturebooks from the eye level of the child. Her pictures vibrate with energy and explosive emotions. With a restrained palette and ever-innovative pictorial solutions, she shifts ingrained perspectives and pushes the boundaries of the picturebook medium. Taking children’s clear view of the world as her starting point, she addresses their questions with forceful artistic expression and offers open answers. With liberating humour and levity, she also deals with the darker aspects of existence.

Jury citation

Argentinian illustrator, cartoonist, graphic artist, writer, singer and composer.

Isol was born Marisol Misenta in Buenos Aires in 1972. She is the writer and illustrator of about 10 published titles and has illustrated a similar number of published works by other authors. She made her debut in 1997 with Vida de perros.

The stories are humorous with surprising twists, occasionally philosophical and always subtle. Isol is on the children’s side, seeing the world through their eyes and exposing the absurdities of the adult world. Isol is constantly exploring new formats and forms for the books themselves. Tener un patito es útil (2007) can be read from two directions with two different results: one story about what a boy can use a duck for, and another story showing what a duck can use a boy for. Nocturno (2011) is a beautiful introduction to the night’s dreams, printed in fluorescent colours that are best enjoyed in the dark. Isol’s great talent as a picturebook author is apparent in the overall experience created by the dramatic composition, the choice of colours and the intensity of the drawn line.

Her works have been published in some 20 countries.
Barbro Lindgren is a literary pioneer. Using adventurous language and rich psychological nuance, she has re-invented not only the picture book for the very young but also the absurd prose story, the existential children’s poem, and realistic fiction for young adults. With perfect pitch, she presents to us both playful shenanigans and moments of bright joy, the inscrutable nature of life and the nearness of death.

The citation of the jury


Barbro Lindgren is an author whose innovative and multifaceted body of work includes picture books for young children, children’s poetry, plays, realistic fiction for young adults, and more absurd prose stories. In all, she has published over a hundred titles, translated into more than thirty languages. Barbro Lindgren has an education in the arts and illustrated several of her own books.

Her stories are often humorous and always possess a uniquely warm tone of voice that speaks directly to the child, whether she is offering amusing escapades or more serious reflections. She has a singular capacity to remember and convey what it was like to be a child, and her seemingly simple style recreates atmospheres and moods that resonate with all her readers, regardless of their age.

Barbro Lindgren is an author who offers us the unexpected. In numerous books, she has developed and explored the absurd in her writing, but her works command a thematic and stylistic breadth granted to only a few, always with complete trust in the reader’s ability to see beneath the surface. With seemingly simple means and with all-embracing warmth, she creates characters that live on long after her books are closed.
PRAESA
LAUREATE 2015

With the joy of reading as its compass point, PRAESA opens new routes into the world of books and literature for young readers in South Africa. Through innovative reading and storytelling projects, PRAESA brings people together and brings literature in multiple languages alive. PRAESA’s outstanding work shows the crucial role of books and stories in creating rich lives for children and young people.

The citation of the jury


For more than twenty years, PRAESA, Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa, has made powerful, innovative moves to highlight literature as a key component of both personal and societal development, always grounded in the specific conditions of South African society and culture. Its work focuses on encouraging children to read for enjoyment, building their self-esteem, and helping them connect to their native language through reading and story.

PRAESA has three core goals: to provide children with high-quality literature in the various South African languages; to collaborate with and foster new networks among publishers and organisations that promote reading; and to initiate and carry out activities that can help sustain a living culture of reading and storytelling in socially vulnerable communities. PRAESA works in constant dialogue with the latest research and in collaboration with volunteers at the grass roots level.

To encourage children to read in their native languages, PRAESA produced the Little Hands books, a series of short books in different African languages. Another project, the Vulindlela Reading Club, combined oral storytelling with reading, singing games, and dramatizations, which become a forerunner to the national reading promotion initiative Nal’ibali, a network of reading clubs.