

Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury President 2020
Junko Yokota
HCA Laudatio, Moscow

Good evening, IBBY Family,

As chair of the 2020 IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Jury, tonight I celebrate with you the winners of the highest international recognition given to an author and an illustrator of children's books. The Andersen Award is sponsored by Nami Island Inc. to whom we express deep appreciation for their on-going and generous support.

I will also take this moment to bring the heartiest greetings and congratulations to the winners from the Patron of the Awards, Her Majesty Queen Margarethe II of Denmark.

On this day, we remember the 3,000 people who lost their lives twenty years ago at the World Trade Center in New York City. IBBY's mission of promoting international understanding through children's books is needed as never before. And still our world is in crisis: from the pandemic, natural disasters and continuing wars; in these times we are especially grateful to be part of an organization that puts the needs of children first, insisting on quality books they so deserve.

The 37th IBBY World Congress has been postponed, altered and re-imagined to be as inclusive as possible during the current pandemic with its subsequent travel restrictions. I would like to applaud the perseverance and courage of our colleagues at IBBY Russia as they bring us this innovative Congress from Moscow; thank you Maria, Angela, Denis, Tatiana and all your colleagues who have worked on the ups and downs for over six years!

I am honored to have served with the following members of the 2020 jury: Mariella Bertelli (Canada), Denis Beznosov (Russia), Tina Bilban (Slovenia), Yasuko Doi (Japan), Nadia El Kholly (Egypt), Viviane Ezratty (France), Eva Kaliskami (Greece), Robin Morrow (Australia), Cecilia Ana Repetti (Argentina) and Ulla Rhedin (Sweden). Elda Nogueira (Brazil) represented the IBBY President and Liz Page acted as Jury Secretary.

Serving on the Andersen jury is an honor; one that holds tremendous responsibility and is also filled with pure joy. Immersing ourselves in the best of the world's literature for children for countless hours, we felt the enormity of the decision. The jury accepted the trust placed in us for making difficult decisions among such highly qualified candidates. Digital dossiers and books were supplied for all jury members. For months, we had online exchanges of our thoughts and questions through blogging, and then we had the opportunity to hold the physical books in our hands and examine them as we assessed our earlier understandings of the content through the digital formats. While we continue to appreciate what physical books offer, we valued the inclusiveness that technology allowed.

We met in person at the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany, a sister organization of IBBY. We are especially thankful to Director Christiane Raabe and former Assistant to the Director, Petra Wörsching, for their ongoing support and hosting of the jury proceedings.

The criteria used to assess the nominations included the aesthetic and literary quality as well as the freshness and innovation of each nominee's work; the ability to see the child's point of view and to stretch their curiosity; and the continuing relevance of the works to children and young people. The Award is based on the entire body of work by each illustrator and each author.

IBBY National sections submitted 34 author nominees and 36 illustrator nominees. From this pool of incredibly highly qualified candidates, the jury deliberated on each nominee, carefully and thoroughly assessing each candidate while maintaining discussions related to the criteria. The shortlist of six authors and six illustrators was announced in January last year, and we produced a video in order to see and hear each candidate introduce their work.

The 2020 winner of the author category is Jacqueline Woodson, submitted by USBBY, the United States National Section of IBBY. From her earliest years, Jacqueline found writing made her happiest. She says, "I still love watching words flower into sentences and sentences blossom into stories." With nearly forty books, Woodson writes for a range of audiences, from picturebooks for young children, novels for older children and teens, and books for adults. Named by the Library of Congress as a National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, Jacqueline's commitment to young readers in offering many ways to see themselves has been recognized.

Woodson's realistic fiction portrays many kinds of life experiences. She writes to offer readers a way to experience life from the characters' lives and viewpoints, not to fix their problems or to offer solutions but to get to a feeling that she herself would want to feel by the end of a story. The dossier for the author winner notes that across all books, Woodson's books "feature lyrical language, powerful characters, and an abiding sense of hope. The dialogues are pitch-perfect, the stories are raw and fresh, and the endings satiate the reader."

Congratulations, Jacqueline Woodson. Please accept our accolades bestowed on you, and our deep appreciation of your work.

(Jacqueline Woodson speech)

The 2020 winner of the illustrator category is Albertine, submitted by the Swiss Section

of IBBY. Beginning with a career teaching screen-printing, Albertine went on to become a press illustrator. Following her marriage to writer Germano Zullo, they collaborated on many works including the creation of books for children that have won awards such as the BIB Golden Apple, the Bologna Ragazzi Award, and more. Animated films were followed by an original puppet show production as Albertine simultaneously exhibited her drawings, screen prints, lithographic works, wood engravings, objects, and notebooks around the world. But her work for which we recognize her with an Andersen Award is found in over thirty books she has created for children. The imaginary worlds she creates offer a playful way for children to ask themselves more questions than to seek answers.

Albertine is known for her signature style of using a stroke instinctively as if it were an endless ball of yarn that continuously unwinds to create images. Building on that style over the years, her work remains fresh. The dossier notes, “Known for work that expresses spontaneity combined with attention to detail, infinite precision as well as a sense of humor,” our winner creates books with multiple levels of interpretation as an illustrator, and also as an author. Whether she creates both text and illustration, or she illustrates the text of another, the poetic creation of a dialogue between text and illustration invites readers to engage with the books.

Congratulations, Albertine. Please accept our accolades bestowed on you, and our deep appreciation of your work.

(Albertine speech)

Please join me again in thanking Jacqueline and Albertine for their lifetime contributions as winners of the 2020 IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award, and to Nami Island, Inc., for their generous sponsorship.

Because we cannot meet in-person today, IBBY will present the winners with their medals and diplomas when it is possible to honour them face-to-face at a joyful event.

Thank you for helping us celebrate the Hans Christian Andersen Awards. Please visit the IBBY website to read more about each of the IBBY Andersen Awards nominees. We celebrate each and every one of them.

Junko Yokota
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