2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award

Announcement of Winners by Shereen Kreidieh, Jury President
IBBY Annual Press Conference, Bologna Children's Book Fair, 13 April 2026

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, friends, and members of the international children's literature community,

It is a great honour and a pleasure to speak to you today as President of the Jury of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award.

The Hans Christian Andersen Award is the highest international distinction given to authors and illustrators of children's books. Presented every two years by the International Board on Books for Young People, IBBY, the award recognises the lifelong achievement of an author and an illustrator whose complete body of work has made an important and lasting contribution to children's literature worldwide. The award honours not a single book, but a body of work that has enriched children's literature and has had a lasting impact on generations of readers.

This year, the Hans Christian Andersen Award received nominations from 44 countries, representing a total of 78 candidates from around the world. This demonstrates the richness, diversity, and vitality of children's literature internationally.

Before announcing the winners, I would like to acknowledge the members of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury. It has been a true pleasure and privilege to work alongside such a highly professional, dedicated, and knowledgeable group of people. Our discussions were thoughtful, rigorous, and deeply engaged with literature and art for children, and the level of expertise and understanding within this jury has been truly remarkable.

Our jury meeting, which took place at the International Youth Library in Munich, was enriching, constructive, and very positive. The discussions showed the depth of knowledge, respect for literature, and commitment of each jury member to the integrity of this award and to children's literature worldwide.

I would like to thank the members of the Jury: Fengxia Tan from China, Mare Müürsepp from Estonia, Giorgia Grilli from Italy, Brenda Dales from the United States, Holly Tonks from the United Kingdom, Morgane Vasta from France, Margaret Anne Suggs from Ireland, Diana Kovach from Argentina, and Shailaja Menon from India. I would also like to warmly thank Carolina Ballester for her continuous support, organisation, and guidance throughout the entire process, and Alessandra for her support and assistance. We are also very grateful to the International Youth Library in Munich for hosting our meeting and providing such an inspiring environment for our work.

After extensive reading and discussions, the Jury selected a shortlist of outstanding candidates.

The shortlisted authors for the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing are: María José Ferrada from Chile, Timothée de Fombelle from France, Lee Geum-yi from the Republic of Korea, Maria Parr from Norway, Pam Muñoz Ryan from the United States, and Michael Rosen from the United Kingdom.

From this remarkable shortlist, the Jury selected the winner of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing.

The 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing is awarded to Michael Rosen from the United Kingdom.

Michael Rosen's body of work demonstrates an extraordinary ability to speak to children with honesty, humour, intelligence, and respect. His writing reflects the rhythms of children's language and thought, combining playfulness with emotional depth and social awareness. Across poetry, novels, and non-fiction, his work invites children into literature, encourages empathy, and opens space for discussion about history, family, loss, identity, and society. His work shows that literature for children can be playful and profound at the same time. Through his extensive and influential body of work, Michael Rosen has made a lasting and significant contribution to children's literature internationally.

The shortlisted illustrators for the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration are: María Wernicke from Argentina, Walid Taher from Egypt, Linda Bondestam from Finland, Gundega Muzikante from Latvia, Beatrice Alemagna from Italy, and Cai Gao from China. From this outstanding shortlist, the Jury selected the winner of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration.

The 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration is awarded to Cai Gao from China. Cai Gao's work demonstrates outstanding artistic quality and a unique visual language that expands the possibilities of illustration for children. Her illustrations combine technical mastery with creativity, sensitivity, and innovation. Her work moves between tradition and modernity, creating images that are visually striking, emotionally resonant, and meaningful for young readers. Through her use of colour, composition, and visual storytelling, she creates books that invite children to explore, imagine, and interpret the world visually. Her body of work represents a significant and lasting contribution to the art of children's books.

On behalf of the Jury, I warmly congratulate Michael Rosen and Cai Gao, as well as all the shortlisted candidates and nominees whose work represents the richness and diversity of children's literature today.

Children's literature remains one of the most powerful ways to build imagination, empathy, understanding, and hope. Books help children make sense of the world and their place in it, and the creators we honour today play a fundamental role in shaping the reading lives of generations of children. Thank you.