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For immediate release

## **The International Board on Books for Young People is proud to announce the Winners of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award**

President of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury, Shereen Kreidieh is pleased to announce the winners of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award. The Andersen Award is sponsored by Nami Island Arts & Education Inc. IBBY expresses its deep appreciation for Nami's generous support of this prestigious award.

The Hans Christian Andersen Award is the highest international distinction given to authors and illustrators of children's books. Given every other year by IBBY, the Hans Christian Andersen Awards recognize lifelong achievement and are given to an author and an illustrator whose works have made an important and lasting contribution to children's literature.

The criteria used to assess the nominations included the distinctive literary and artistic qualities of writing and illustrating, the capacity to engage the reader with confidence in the child's abilities to process complexities, the authentic representation of cultural aspects, as well as the freshness and innovation through the body of work; the ability to see the child's point of view and to stretch their curiosity. All the nominees were assessed on their lifetime achievement to date and the continuing relevance of their works to children and young people.

Seventy-eight candidates from forty-four countries were nominated for the 2026 IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award by the IBBY Sections. After in-depth discussions related to the criteria, the international jury carefully and thoroughly assessed each one of these highly qualified candidates. The shortlist of six authors and six illustrators was announced in January this year.

### **The 2026 winners are:**

**Michael Rosen** from the United Kingdom for Writing and **Cai Gao** from China for Illustration.

### **2026 Author Winner: Michael Rosen**

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.

### **2026 Illustrator Winner: Cai Gao**

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.

### **We also celebrate the 2026 Finalists:**

#### **Authors:**

**Ahmad Akbarpour** from Iran

**María José Ferrada** from Chile

**Timothée de Fombelle** from France

**Lee Geum-yi** from the Republic of Korea

**Pam Muñoz Ryan** from the United States

**Michael Rosen** from the United Kingdom

#### **Illustrators:**

**Beatrice Alemagna** from Italy

**Linda Bondestam** from Finland

**Cai Gao** from China

**Gundega Muzikante** from Latvia

**Walid Taher** from Egypt

**María Wernicke** from Argentina

**The ten-member 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury comprised the following experts:** Brenda Dales (United States), Nadia El Kholy (Egypt), Giorgia Grilli (Italy), Diana Kovach (Argentina), Shailaja Menon (India), Mare Mürsepp (Estonia), Margaret Anne Suggs (Ireland), Fengxia Tan (China), Holly Tonks (United Kingdom), and Morgane Vasta (France). The Jury was led by Jury President Shereen Kreidieh. Carolina Ballester acted as Jury Secretary.

Profiles of all the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award nominees can be found in the special Andersen Award issue of IBBY's quarterly journal ***Bookbird. A Journal of International Children's Literature*** (Issue 63/4, 2025). In addition, profiles of the shortlisted candidates can be found on the [IBBY website](https://www.ibby.org).

### **About the International Board on Books for Young People – IBBY**

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), established in 1953, is a non-profit organization that represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together.

#### **Contact:**

For more information, full biographies of the winners and information about IBBY go to [www.ibby.org](https://www.ibby.org) or write to Executive Director Carolina Ballester at [carolina.ballester@ibby.org](mailto:carolina.ballester@ibby.org)