

Speaker's manuscript – Literature Prize 2018 and 2019 Olga Tokarczuk and Peter Handke

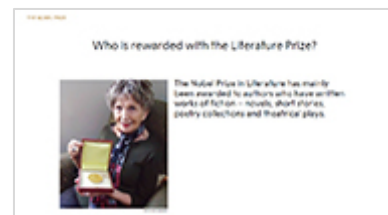
The Nobel Prize in Literature

- The Nobel Prize in Literature is one of the five prizes founded by Alfred Nobel and awarded on 10 December every year.
- Before Nobel died on 10 December 1896, he wrote in his will that the largest part of his fortune should be used to fund a prize to those who "have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind".
- One of the five prizes should go "to the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction".



Who is rewarded with the Literature Prize?

- The Nobel Prize in Literature has mainly been awarded to authors who have written works of fiction – such as novels, short stories, poetry collections and theatrical plays.
- The Literature Prize has also been awarded to authors in other literary genres.
- In 2016 the Prize went to a musician and songwriter, when Bob Dylan became the Laureate in Literature.
- Examples of authors who have received the Prize are Selma Lagerlöf (1909), Ernest Hemingway (1954), Wole Soyinka (1986), Alice Munro (2013) and Tomas Tranströmer (2011).



Nobel Prizes for two years were announced

- 2019 was a special year in the history of the Literature Prize. The Swedish Academy – the institution that selects the Nobel Laureates in Literature – decided in 2018 to postpone the announcement of that year's prize until 2019.
- So on 10 October 2019 Mats Malm, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, announced the Nobel Prizes in Literature for two years during the same press conference at the Grand Hall of the Swedish Academy in Stockholm.
- The 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to the Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk, and the 2019 Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to the Austrian writer Peter Handke.



The 2018 Nobel Laureate

- Olga Tokarczuk is one of Poland's best-known and most highly acclaimed writers.
- A trained psychologist, she writes novels, short stories and poetry.
- She has received the Nike Award, Poland's most prestigious literary prize, several times. In 2018 she was awarded the Man Booker International Prize in Britain for her novel *Flights*.
- Her books have been translated into 30 languages.



Voracious reader, psychologist and writer

- Olga Tokarczuk was born in 1962 in Sulechów, Poland. Her parents were teachers, and her father also served as a school librarian. She often spent time in the library, reading everything she could get hold of.
- At age 18 she began studying psychology at the University of Warsaw, but by then she was already writing both poetry and novels.
- In 1993 she made her fiction debut with the novel "The Journey of the Book-People", which has not yet been translated into English. However, her breakthrough novel *Primeval and Other Times* is available in English. It is a family saga that deals with several tragic events in 20th century Polish history.
- While Olga Tokarczuk is well-known and acclaimed in her home country, she has also been subjected to hatred because she had urged the Poles to face their past – during the Second World War, Jews were murdered by their Polish neighbours.



Viewing the world from above

- Olga Tokarczuk is inspired by maps and by viewing the world from above. Her main focus is on Polish landscapes and stories. In some of her works, it is even as if places are the main characters.
- In her novel *House of Day, House of Night* (2002), many small stories about the lives and migrations of people in the Silesian landscape contribute to a rich portrayal of this area in southwestern Poland.
- Tokarczuk is also called the master of the quick portrait, since she can portray figures glimpsed only at places like airports and hotels in a way that invites the reader to guess about them.
- Her longest work is "The Books of Jacob" (2014), which has not yet been translated into English. It is a documentary novel about the remarkable mystic and sect leader Jacob Frank, who lived in the 18th century. The story is told through descriptions of Frank by several different people.



The 2019 Nobel Laureate

- Peter Handke, an author for more than 50 years, has come to be regarded as one of the most influential writers in Europe after the Second World War.
- He has written novels, essays, notebooks, dramatic works and screenplays and has received a number of literary prizes, for example the Franz Kafka Prize and the International Ibsen Award.
- Handke has long been regarded as an experimental writer. For example, in his plays he has often gone against the usual expectations of a theatre audience about how a play should be.
- He has also been heavily criticised because he expressed his support for Serbian nationalists in the Balkan wars of the 1990s.



A long and varied literary career

- Peter Handke was born in 1942 in the province of Kärnten (Carinthia), southern Austria, in the middle of the Second World War.
- His mother Maria belonged to the Slovenian minority and his father was a German soldier, whom Handke met only after becoming an adult himself. Instead he grew up with his mother and her new husband.
- Handke studied law at the University of Graz but broke off his studies when he made his debut in 1966 with both a novel and a production of one of his plays.
- Handke has lived in Chaville, outside Paris, for nearly 30 years. Many of his works are about exile, standing between two worlds and life on the margins, for example in suburbs and small unknown villages rather than in big cities. Handke believes that the centre is everywhere.



Discovering the world in new ways

- Peter Handke believes that one point of departure of his writing is personal catastrophe. We can see this, for example, in his book *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams: A Life Story* (1972), where he briefly but affectionately writes about his mother after her suicide. In the book, he tries to tell his mother's story based on how people viewed the role of women during her lifetime.
- Handke explores the memory of the dead and his own origins in several works. At the same time, they are full of the joy of discovery – of viewing the world in new ways.
- Handke has made important translations to German from many classic writers, such as William Shakespeare, the Greek writers Euripides and Sophocles and the French writers Marguerite Duras and Patrick Modiano.

