

Speaker's manuscript, slide show

The 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature

Title slide

Now the world has found out who will receive the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Today you will learn more about the background of the Nobel Prize and about this year's Prize.

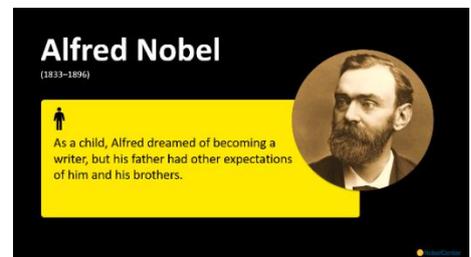


Alfred Nobel

Alfred Nobel was born in Stockholm, Sweden on October 23, 1833.

As a nine-year-old, he moved together with his older brothers and his mother to Saint Petersburg, the capital of Russia at that time. There his father Immanuel had started a factory.

In St. Petersburg, Alfred received a good education and dreamed of becoming a writer. Alfred's father made him study natural sciences and technology instead, since he and his brothers were expected to take over the family's factory.



Dynamite

Alfred Nobel, his father and his brother Emil tried to invent an explosive that was safer than pure nitroglycerine. It was very dangerous to use nitroglycerine as an explosive – so dangerous that Alfred's brother Emil died in an explosives accident in 1864.

But Alfred finally succeeded in developing a method for producing nitroglycerine and a way to use it as an explosive.

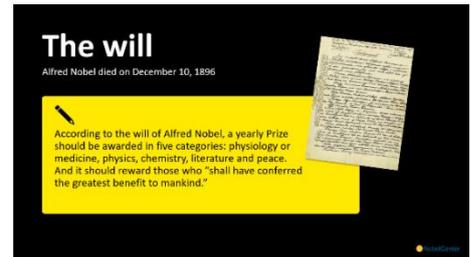
He named his invention "Dynamite" in 1867. Dynamite was a comparatively safe explosive. It was in huge demand during the period of industrialisation, since there was so much construction work. By taking out patents on many of his ideas, Alfred earned a lot of money and started many factories around the world.



The will

Alfred Nobel died of a stroke on December 10, 1896. He had no children, so in his will he wrote that a large part of his fortune should be placed in a fund. The yearly interest on this fund would pay for a prize given to “those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to mankind.”

The interest would be divided into five equal parts, with one part awarded to “the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction”. The first Nobel Prize was awarded in 1901. Since then, more than 900 Prizes have been awarded to different people and organisations.



The Nobel Prize Award Ceremony

On December 10 each year, the Nobel Prize is presented. This year the Prize in each category consists of a medal, a diploma and nine million Swedish kronor – or over a million US dollars.

The Prize Award Ceremony is held at Stockholm Concert Hall for all categories except the Peace Prize, which is awarded in Oslo, Norway. After the actual Award Ceremony, there is an elegant Banquet in each city to honour the new Nobel Laureates.



The Nobel Prize in Literature

“the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction”.

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 previous Laureates

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).



The 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature

This year's Nobel Prize in Literature has been awarded to the British author Kazuo Ishiguro, "who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world," according to the Prize citation.



The Laureate

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan. When he was five years old, he moved with his family to the United Kingdom, where he then grew up and later studied at university. Today Ishiguro lives in London, and since publishing his first book he has worked as a full-time writer. Kazuo Ishiguro is also a musician.



His literary works

According to the Prize citation, Ishiguro is receiving the Prize for his novels. And most of his literary works have been novels. But Ishiguro has also written film and television scripts, as well as short stories. He actually made his literary debut in 1981 as a writer of short stories. His work was included in an anthology – or collection – of texts by various new writers.



Ishiguro first book, entitled *A Pale View of Hills*, came out in 1982. It is set in Nagasaki a few years after the end of the Second World War, in other words around the time he himself was born.

Since his debut novel, Ishiguro has published seven more books. Among the best known as *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, which were both turned into films. The film version of *The Remains of the Day* was nominated for eight Oscars.

Language and themes

Kasuo Ishiguro writes in different genres and likes to mix genres in the same book. His later novels include elements of fantasy. One example of this is *The Buried Giant*, who came out in 2015. It is about an elderly couple who go on a road trip through a bleak, gloomy landscape where monsters and demons lurk.



As for Ishiguro's language, Sara Danius – Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy – says, "He writes a restrained, very careful and precise style. Style absolutely no drama, all happening between the lines."

While Ishiguro's novels are quite different from each other, there are themes that recur in many of his books. Examples of this are friendship and love, memory and identity, truth and lies.