

How to Spot International Success

It's tricky working out if a book is going to be commercially successful when you can't read the language it was originally written in. Here are a few things you can look for when acquiring a book to translate, from an agent or publisher pitching it to you, to dipping into a world of books and finding one on your own.

Where to find great books

- Find out which publishers around the world regularly buy the rights to your books, then look at the books they publish in their native languages.
- Look at award longlists and shortlists, as well as recommendations from international organisations – some of these are listed below.

Information to request from the submitting publisher/agent

- Have the rights for this book been sold to other countries? This is a good sign if the book has already successfully travelled to its neighbouring countries and beyond.
- Sales figures, relative to the publishing market in a book's native country. One note of caution here for new titles is that some books take longer than others to take off, and some authors don't sell well until their third or fourth book.
- Details about the author, such as the languages they speak, their willingness to travel for events and how active they are in the local publishing community.

Information you can search for

- Author's/illustrator's track record: previous publications, prizes, reviews. Use Google Advance Search function to see what people are saying about the author and their individual titles, and how often they are mentioned.
- Schools, school libraries and education websites: does the title appear to have been put on a reading list for schools in its home country?
- Reviews: if you think the review looks like it has come from a tabloid, broadsheet or low-key blog, Google the publication and the reviewer. It's usually too much to ask native-speaking friends and colleagues to read and comment on the entire book, so ask them to translate or paraphrase short reviews.
- Prizes and awards: some countries have a book prize for every town, others have hardly any prizes at all. Google the prize and see how much coverage it gets. Google Translate will suffice here.

Major international prizes and other lists

- **Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA)**
The world's largest award for children's and young adult literature, the award is given annually to a single laureate or to several.
<http://www.alma.se/en/>
- **Bologna Ragazzi Award**
Aimed at selecting the finest illustrated children's books, the award honours the best productions in terms of their graphic and editorial qualities.
http://www.bolognachildrensbokfair.com/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=8382
- **Hans Christian Andersen Awards**
An award given every year by IBBY, the Hans Christian Andersen Awards recognise a lifelong achievement and are presented to an author and an illustrator whose works have made an important contribution to children's literature.
<http://www.ibby.org/awards-activities/awards/hans-christian-andersen-awards/>
- **The International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY)**
Many countries have their own branches of IBBY that produce an annual/biannual publication (often available in English) promoting what they deem to be their country's best children's books. The IBBY Honour List can be viewed on their website.
<http://www.ibby.org/>
- **The White Ravens**
This annual list is compiled by language specialists at the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany, and consists of a selection of newly published books from around the world that are considered to be especially noteworthy. The White Ravens Catalogue is introduced each year at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. The "White Raven" label is given to books that deserve worldwide attention because of their universal themes and/or their exceptional and often innovative artistic and literary style and design.
<https://www.ijb.de/en/reference-library/white-ravens-online.html>
- **Various cultural institutes' publications**
If a title appears in one of these publications, take advantage of the contact info for the relevant institute/embassy. Staff at these institutes are usually extremely helpful and are sometimes responsible for translation grants or have access to a marketing budget so you can fly an author over or host a launch event.

Note: all links are correct as of March 2019.