Amidst these unsettling days, let's take some time away from the news to reflect and to remind ourselves that today (2 April) is **International Children's Book Day**. IBBY (the International Board on Books for Young People) has celebrated the day on Hans Christian Andersen's birthday since 1967, with a mission to "inspire a love of reading and to call attention to children's books".

This year **Slovenia is the sponsor**, and the theme is "Hunger for Words". It's a theme that has been summed up beautifully by Slovenian children's writer Peter Svetina: "Words in poetry and in stories are food. Not food for the body, not food that can fill up your stomach. But food for the spirit and food for the soul" (translated by Jernej Županič).

With many people stuck indoors, sharing books with your children and enjoying them yourself is a rewarding way to spend time together and explore new worlds, ideas and emotions, enriching the imagination as well as improving literacy skills in an entertaining way. Reading for pleasure has never felt so relevant.

**Breaking down borders**

International Children's Book Day is also an opportunity to discover children's books from round the world. The UK famously sources less than 3% of its children's books from other languages, but websites like WorldKidLit, OutsideInWorld and BookTrust's *children's books in translation book list* are good starting places to find recommendations. Even though their doors may be closed, you can still join your local library online and borrow ebooks and audiobooks, whilst many bookshops are selling physical books online.

Reading literature in more than one language is nothing new here in Wales. I have just started research into "Developing Strategic Action for the Internationalisation of Children's Stories within the Publishing Sector in Wales", as part of a creative industries PhD at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David funded by the KESS II European Social Fund and sponsored by the Books Council of Wales. My research brief is to explore the strategies that the publishing sector in Wales needs in order to strengthen its operations in children's
literature at an international level, focusing on import, export and co-production.

As Helgard Krause, chief executive of the Books Council of Wales, says: "A good story can travel the world, unhindered by geographical borders. By sponsoring this doctoral research, the aim is to find which children's books from Wales travel best and why. What are the universal themes which attract young readers and what styles of writing are most successful?"

**Rich heritage**

Wales' landscape, mythology, people and language have long inspired children's writers and illustrators, from JRR Tolkien, Alan Garner, Susan Cooper, Roald Dahl and Diana Wynne Jones to Catherine Fisher, Jackie Morris, Philip Pullman, and Children's Laureate Wales Eloise Williams. Their books have shown that great stories set in or influenced by Wales can travel internationally.

The Tir na n-Og Children's Book Awards honour the best children's books published in Welsh and English (with an authentic Welsh background) each year. The list of previous winners is an impressive overview of some of the best children's authors and illustrators from Wales, including T Llew Jones, Manon Steffan Ros, Mererid Hopwood, Catherine Fisher, GR Gemin and Jackie Morris.

The 2020 Tir na n'Og Children's Book Awards shortlist has recently been revealed, and the winners will be announced during the summer term. Further details here: [http://www.cllc.org.uk/newyddion-news/news-detail?id=13345](http://www.cllc.org.uk/newyddion-news/news-detail?id=13345).

*Poster illustrated by Damijan Stepančič*

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