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Laurie Halse Anderson receives the 2023 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award

Laurie Halse Anderson is one of America’s foremost writers for young adults. Her breakthrough novel, *Speak*, was published in 1999 and has been translated into many languages and adapted for film. Over the course of her long career, Anderson has also authored texts for children’s books and picture books. The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award is given annually and is the largest in the world of its kind. The prestigious award comes with a cash prize of SEK 5 million (EUR 450,000).

– Laurie Halse Anderson writes about challenging topics in a way that both engages and moves us. There is a passion in her writing that goes straight to the heart, says jury chair Boel Westin.

The Citation of the Jury

“In her tightly written novels for young adults, Laurie Halse Anderson gives voice to the search for meaning, identity, and truth, both in the present and the past. Her darkly radiant realism reveals the vital role of time and memory in young people’s lives. Pain and anxiety, yearning and love, class and sex are investigated with stylistic precision and dispassionate wit. With tender intensity, Laurie Halse Anderson evokes, moods, and emotions and never shies from even the hardest things.”

About Laurie Halse Anderson

Laurie Halse Anderson (b. 1961 in Potsdam, New York) debuted as an author in 1996. In her richly expressive novels for young people—all narrated in the first person—Anderson gives voice to the adolescent experience with sometimes brutal honesty. Here is resignation, even desperation, but also a determination for change kept alive by the search for meaning, identity, and truth.

The yearning for love and belonging is a recurring theme for Anderson.

Laurie Halse Anderson makes her home in Philadelphia. Alongside her writing, she is powerfully committed to issues related to sexual violence, diversity, and book censorship.

Further information and images

An in-depth introduction to the works of Laurie Halse Anderson, written by the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award jury, is at alma.se/en

For high-resolution press images, please see the publisher/author website.

Selected books

Laurie Halse Anderson’s literary breakthrough came with the young adult novel *Speak* (1999). When thirteen-year-old Melinda is raped at a disorderly party, she calls the police, but she cannot bring herself to talk about what happened. *Speak* is a skilfully written, informed depiction of how rape survivors experience stigmatization as a result of emotional and physical bullying. It has been translated into many languages and has been adapted both as a graphic novel with illustrations by Emily Carroll (2018) and for film (2004).

One of Anderson’s most noted books is *Wintergirls* (2009). It is a harrowing and detailed documentation of two girls’ life-threatening eating disorders, including calorie counting and self-harming behaviours.

The Impossible Knife of Memory (2014) tells the story of Hayley and her father, who have moved back to the city Hayley grew up in so that she can finish school there. Hayley’s father is a war veteran who has PTSD and



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abuses alcohol in order to repress painful memories. Hayley—the grown-up in the family—lives in a state of constant worry about her father and hides her difficult situation from her school and the authorities.

The trilogy *Seeds of America* includes the books *Chains* (2008), *Forge* (2010), and *Ashes* (2016). The series opens in 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, and concludes in 1781. At the centre of events is Isabel, a 13-year-old enslaved girl who, with her sister, has been promised her freedom in her enslaver's will. Instead, Isabel is sold at auction and separated from her sister. *Seeds of America* is an impressive picture of a society and an era. It reflects Anderson's burning interest both in the history of America and in the ways that individual destinies are formed.

Shout (2019) is a memoir-in-verse in which Anderson writes about her own upbringing and how she found her way to books, reading, and language. Like Melinda in *Speak*, Anderson was raped at the age of 13, an act of violence that affected both her life and her work as an author. In one poem, Andersson writes: "The only thing that helped me breathe was opening a book."

Official website

<https://madwomanintheforest.com/>