

# DRAW ME A STORY

Competition has heated up as an international award highlights the best of Chinese-language picture books for children. **Liu Zhihua** reports.

Chinese-language picture books, with delicate drawings and stories for children, are attracting global attention for their quality.

Applications for the fourth annual Feng Zikai Picture Book Award will open on Jan 1 and close on Feb 28, the organizing committee announced last week in Beijing. The award is the only international literary honor for original Chinese-language children's picture books.

The writers and illustrators of the winning book will once again take home a total of \$20,000. The organizer also buys 3,000 copies of the winning book to donate to schools to promote reading.

Writers and illustrators of each of four runner-up books will share \$5,000 this year.

The biennial award began in 2009, and any picture book for children aged from 3 to 12 that first published in Chinese in the two years before the award year is eligible, regardless of where it was first published.

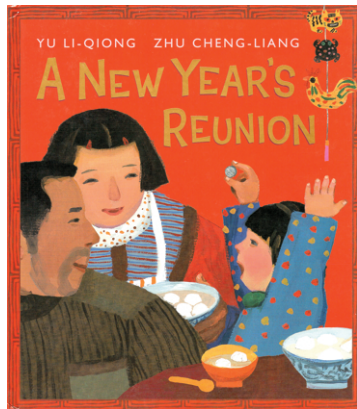
"The board feels it's necessary to encourage writers and illustrators to create quality original Chinese picture books for children," says Fok Yuk-ying, a consultant to the Feng Zikai board since 2007.

"It also wants to encourage publishers to produce original Chinese-language children's picture books, and to engage the public to value and read them."

Hong Kong-based Chen Yet-sen Family Foundation, a charity established in 2003 that promotes reading and the building of libraries for children in rural China and Africa, decided to sponsor the award in 2007. Its treasurer, Daisy Chen, had noticed her grandchildren burying their heads in picture books, but most of them were translated versions that often lost certain features and originality, says Fok, who is also assistant professor of literature and cultural studies at the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

Fang Weiping, a two-time judge for the award and an established children's literature critic in China with Zhejiang Normal University, observes that applicants from the mainland have increased quickly in the past few years, as well as from other countries, such as Japan and Malaysia.

Though the Chinese mainland lags far



**Tuan Yuan**  
By: Yu Liqiong and Zhu Chengliang  
Publisher: Tomorrow Publishing House  
Year published: 2008  
Pages: 40  
Price: 32.8 yuan (\$5.33)

behind developed countries in reading and creating children's picture books, the publishers of such books have expanded both the number of imported titles and domestically produced volumes, Fang says. However, the quality varies considerably.

Fang is also pleased that the award promotes Chinese-language picture books to the rest of the world.

"Many of the awarded books have been translated from Chinese into foreign languages such as English, Korean and Japanese, and some have become globally recognized," Fang says, citing the example of *Tuan Yuan*, or *A New Year's Reunion* (in English), which resonates with every child who misses family members when they are away, and shows how love endures over time and distance.

Author Yu Liqiong and illustrator Zhu Chengliang, both from the mainland, tell a bittersweet story in the book from the first-person perspective of a little girl, Maomao.

Her father works at a faraway place to support the family, and comes home just



PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Some of the books that won the Feng Zikai Picture Book Award in the past few years.

once a year for the Spring Festival. When he comes back, Maomao barely recognizes him, but before long the family is happily making sticky rice balls, enjoying fireworks and watching the dragon dance in the streets below.

The father gets a haircut, carries out repairs to the house, and hides a lucky coin in dumplings for Maomao to find, following an old tradition.

Yet all too soon, it is time for the father to go away again.

After winning the award in 2009, the book was published in the United States, Japan, South Korea and Britain.

It also was named the best illustrated children's book of 2011 by the New York Times.

In 2009, judges from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the United

States studied 330-odd entries before awarding the writer and illustrator of the winning book \$10,000 each. Nine shortlist finalists each received \$1,000.

Since then, both judges and applicants have come from an increasing number of countries and areas, according to Fok.

The judges include literary critics, scholars, education experts, artists and reading promoters, Fok adds.

After announcing the final results, likely in the second half of 2015, the award organizing committee will hold exhibitions of the winning and honored entries, forums on children's picture books, and lectures from award winners.

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## Signed *Little Prince* sketch goes to auction

By **AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE** in Paris

An original watercolor illustration from Antoine de Saint-Exupery's timeless classic *The Little Prince*, one of the world's best-selling books ever, is to be auctioned in Paris next week.

The signed sketch, which appeared on page 17 of the original 1943 version of the novella, is expected to fetch between 400,000 and 500,000 euros (\$500,000-\$600,000), according to auction house Artcurial.

The drawing depicts the Turkish astronomer, who discovered the Asteroid B612, the eponymous Little Prince's planet, pointing at a blackboard of equations and mathematical diagrams.

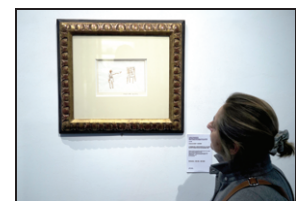
By far Saint-Exupery's most famous work, *The Little Prince* has been translated into more than 270 languages, including Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese.

Artcurial said it is the most widely read book in the world after the Bible.

The book is a series of parables in which a boy prince recounts his adventures among the stars to a downed pilot on Earth. It was published in English and French in New York in 1943.

Himself a pilot, Saint-Exupery died mysteriously during a 1944 reconnaissance mission aged 44, and so did not live to see the publication of his book in France in 1946, following the end of World War II.

The watercolor sketch, measuring 21.3 by 23.9 centimeters, is to go under the hammer on Dec 9.



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

A woman looks at a watercolor sketch of the Turkish astronomer, who discovered the planet of the boy prince in *The Little Prince*, on Nov 27 in Paris.

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