

Mandarache. Premio Jóvenes Lectores de Cartagena

<https://engagenow.eu/case-studies/mandarache-premio-jovenes-lectores-de-cartagena/>

The project consists of two international literary awards for narrative: the Hache Award for Youth Literature and the Mandarache Award for Young Readers. The Mandarache programme also includes meetings with writers, presentations, book signings, reading clubs, literary gatherings, poetic recitals, and performances.

Mandarache refers to a readership-training project promoted by the Ayuntamiento de Cartagena (Murcia) and Grupo Promotor. The Mandarache programme also includes meetings with writers, presentations, book signings, reading clubs, literary gatherings, poetic recitals, and performances. Mandarache currently has 60 promoters and more than 5,000 young people registered. The Hache Award is made up of 360 reading committees (6 members in each one), 2,160 young people between 12 and 14-years-old and the Mandarache Award is made up of 500 reading committees (6 members in each one) and 3,000 young people aged 15-30. The project revolves around the two literary prizes mentioned above and the Mandarache +30, a network of reading clubs for people over 30-years-old and the Mandarache Notebook, a writing workshop for 15 youngsters to be trained in creative literature. The project was awarded the 2014 National Prize for the Promotion of Reading and the "Los Mejores" of La Verdad Prize in 2017.

The first pilot programme saw 700 students from six different secondary schools participate. The surprising success of the event has been key to the project. The citizen assembly that leads the project is named Grupo Promotor (https://premiomandarache.cartagena.es/grupo_promotor.asp), an assembly of more than 60 educators (mostly teachers and librarians) that make every decision on the project and select the book finalists and authors every year. Grupo Promotor is a group of citizens that engage with the aims of Mandarache as volunteers. Most of them are in Grupo Promotor representing their institutions (schools, libraries and associations).

Everybody in Cartagena, politicians, journalists and experts naturally looks to them and respects their work and their position.

International literary awards for narrative

LOCATION: SPAIN, CARTAGENA

WEBSITE: PREMIOMANDARACHE.CARTAGENA.ES

YEAR THE PROJECT BEGAN: 2005

DURATION: > 24 MONTHS

ORGANIZER: [GRUPO PROMOTOR PREMIO MANDARACHE](#)

IN COLLABORATION WITH: [AYUNTAMIENTO DE CARTAGENA, BIBLIOTECAS MUNICIPALES DE CARTAGENA, IMPLICA2](#)

ARTS AND CULTURE SECTORS:

- LITERATURE: WRITING
- LITERATURE: READING
- LITERATURE: COMPREHENSION
- LITERATURE: ORAL EXPRESSION
- PERFORMING ARTS

AGE TARGETS:

- YOUNGSTERS AND ADOLESCENTS (15-18 YEARS OLDS)
- ADULTS (OVER 18 YEARS OLD) (15-30)

GENDER TARGETS: ALL

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC TARGETS:

- URBAN

AIMS:

- EDUCATION
- EMPOWERMENT
- LITERACY

An average of 30 to 50 titles are valued by Grupo Promotor taking into account that they must be books published in one of the official languages of the Spanish state and recently published. There are three finalists for each award (6 total) and the idea is to recognise a range of varied reading experiences. Throughout each programme Mandarache discovered that, although they tend to target young readers into a homogenous group of readers, the tastes of young readers are very diverse. Also, Mandarache works with youth literature that is not explicitly for young people, books that have not necessarily been written for young people or talk about their world. Authors like Rosa Montero, Almudena Grandes, Gustavo Martín Garzo, Rosa Regàs, Eduardo Mendoza and Javier Cercas have come through the project. Knowing that in Cartagena each year there are more than 5,000 young adults reading, debating, analysing and working on their books, is an amazing experience for them and an honour.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

- Mandarache Notebook: is a writing workshop for 15 youngsters selected every year, but it is also much more. Youngsters are trained in creative literature, educated as excellent readers, and empowered in readership in order to develop their linguistic skills and complex thinking. It is inspiring to witness how the Mandarache Notebook programme can have an impact on young readers thoughts. Through this workshop, it is easy to see how young people change; how they grow up; and how through improving their reading and writing skills these 15 youngsters participating in the programme become more intelligent, aware and critical. Every Mandarache Notebook programme embraces an active attitude. At the end of the workshop youngster begin to organise themselves and start taking their own actions as a group: publishing fanzines and giving performances without any tutoring, giving young people independence in reading and writing.

- Contests: The Mandarache Award organises four contests every year in order to foster young people as active readers: literary criticism, micro-stories, video-quotes and illustration.

MAIN GOAL OF THE PROJECT

The aim of the project is to encourage reading habits in young people as well as improve the reading skills of the people of Cartagena.

ROLE OF YOUNG AUDIENCES

The jury of both prizes is composed of the young people themselves who through reading committees analyse the books presented. This is the key factor of the project.

How it works? In autumn while young people apply to become part of the jury the city council provides the books to them free of charge. Then, in winter all the authors who have been selected as finalists come to Cartagena to present their books at a meeting where they meet with thousands of readers. Throughout April, readers vote through the web for the winners. Finally, the winners of both prizes come back in May to Cartagena to receive their award.

The Mandarache prize encourages young people to participate actively at every level of the project. They are considered not only as receivers but also as agents or actors. Young readers have the opportunity to interact with the winners of the prize by asking questions about the process of literary creation.

The main activity in the programme is the meeting with the finalists. In the Mandarache programme writers and young readers get to maintain a genuine dialogue. It works like this: first, a member of Grupo Promotor introduces briefly the book and the author; then, the writer thanks and greets the audience; and after this, the audience begins to ask questions (1.30 hours). This is the “Mandarache way” that has proven to work very well. They realised that giving young people an active role is fundamental, because young people learn from their peers and from each other. [More information about these meetings.](#)

AIMS

Mandarache wants to encourage literature to be a tool to enhance critical thinking, where reading becomes a tool for social progress and the improvement of coexistence. The main objective of meeting with the winners is to share reading experiences and to transform these to be on a collective level, in this way Mandarache can help young people to improve their ability to participate actively in cultural life, with literature challenging us and making us grow as human being.

WHY IS IT “A CASE OF GOOD PRACTICE”?

The Mandarache/Hache awards place young people at the centre of the project. Youngsters’ opinions and voices are heard and are decisive in the final decision of who is awarded the prize. The project understands perfectly that to reach a young audience they need to create new channels of communication to give them more visibility and they use social networks masterfully to achieve this. They reinvent a literary project, in this case, a literary award, from a young person’s perspective, giving them the leading role entirely. That is the way young people develop new skills, become more curious about the world of books, feel autonomous, take control of their own activities, and feel that the project belongs to them. The project incorporates young people into the decision-making meaning that young people feel that they have authority and responsibility in a big event, therefore empowering them. Youngsters become agents of change instead of targets to be changed. The result has been very successful: since 2005, 40,000 youngsters have registered.