



PRIX JEUNESSE 2020 Pre-selection Report

In mid-January, nine leading experts on children's media came together in Munich to discuss the 397 submitted programmes and determine 88 finalists for PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2020. They spent 6 days watching, arguing about and pondering the wonderful submissions we have received from all over the world. The following report will give you an overview of all the categories and what challenges our jurors were facing.

Category 11 – 15 Years Non-Fiction

by David Kleeman, Senior VP of Global Trends for Dubit, USA, UK

The 11-15 Non-Fiction category may be the most stable and consistent of all PRIX JEUNESSE sectors. The bulk of the entries are – as they long have been – personal profiles of young people. Some are passing through a challenging moment; others triumphing over difficulty, showing off an accomplishment, adjusting to a new life situation, or simply getting to try a special experience.

In any case, the genre is designed to engage an audience that is, itself, going through the passages of adolescence. They're trying out different personas, skills, interests and viewpoints, and so these documentary or reportage pieces help send the message that there are many different ways to be a teenager, and that resilience, creativity and discovery are critical skills for getting through these years.

Documentary is a very difficult genre. We saw a number of programs that felt inauthentic or constructed, not telling the young person's actual story but a story the director wanted to convey. Teens have a very quick detector for anything fake or trying to "sell" them on an idea, so for this age in particular it's vital to create as simple and honest a story as possible.

There were a fascinating exceptions to the personal documentary line, including innovative formats that combined sketch comedy with factual information.

We were quite surprised not to find more content around one of the central issues of concern to young people – climate change. At a time when teenagers have a role model their own age leading the world's dialogue about the environment, we assumed broadcasters would respond with stories and ideas to encourage youth participation.



Category 11 – 15 Years Fiction

by David Kleeman, Senior VP of Global Trends for Dubit, USA, UK

In the commercial and streaming television world, young teens are one of the most sought-after audience segments – in recent years, we've seen big-budget series like *Stranger Things*, *13 Reasons Why*, *Riverdale* and more. Tweens and teens are also watching adult series intended for well beyond their age – *Game of Thrones*, *Walking Dead* and others. Fantasy, mystery and action/adventure are among this age group's top five favourite genres.

This was reflected in the entries for PRIX JEUNESSE 2020 in 11-15 Fiction. We screened a number of series that incorporated either supernatural or fantasy elements, or that used the tension that so many current popular series employ.

This is a challenge to pull off successfully. Teens have come to expect the production quality of the "big" programs they watch, so those with smaller budgets have to compete on other levels – closeness to the feelings of the audience, clever storytelling, or perhaps how "real" they seem to the audience. In screening the category, we saw series that were successful in hitting the content and emotional "bulls-eye" of 11-15 year olds.

Ensemble casting is still central to the tween-teen audience. As young people mature and develop unique interests and passions, it helps draw audience to have a group of young people who reflect different backgrounds, personalities, ways of problem-solving. They may be friends, love interests, enemies, rivals, siblings, or any number of other relationships, but their role is to round out the story and give multiple points of connection.

When the stories get serious, though, it helps to have a very close focus on a single teen. Personal story entries included illness and recovery, stuttering, emerging sexual preference, depression and more. There were, as noted above, other characters relating to them, but never a question of whose story is central.

Teen drama can be very serious, so we were happy to find a good bit of comedy in the entries. Humour for teens has to be very real to them, and so can often have an edge that may make adults uncomfortable. Some shows, however, took a very broad – slapstick – approach to comedy, proving that even as they enter adolescence, kids simply love to laugh.



Category 7 – 10 Years Non-Fiction

by Jenny Buckland, CEO of the Australian Children's Television Foundation, Australia

The 7 – 10 non-fiction category was the largest category of all, with entries from nearly 40 countries. We watched more than 100 programs to select our 21 finalists. Decision making was tough!

It was a privilege to go on a tour of the world from a room at Bayerischer Rundfunk, exploring what the world offers its children by way of entertaining and informative non-fiction television. Documentaries about children (which we described as “portraits”) dominated the category, alongside the regular sprinkling of gameshows, magazines, “reality TV”, nature and wildlife programs. There were a very small number of history and craft programs, and disappointingly, barely any news programs.

The “portrait” style documentaries came from absolutely everywhere and we saw countless inspiring stories of children moving between cultures as immigrants, overcoming adversity, introducing their disability (or what it is like to live with a sibling with a disability), or being a force for positive change or good in their communities. The world is most definitely in good hands with the current generation of children! We cheered often and shed a few tears for the way these shows had us walking in someone else's shoes. The sheer volume of portraits meant that many missed out on the final selection. It was important to us that the program was genuinely intended for the 7 – 10 age group, that it was well paced and engaging and not a film for adults “about” the featured child who happened to be 7 - 10. We also wanted to experience the child's own voice and understand what they wanted the audience to know, and not come away with the sense that they had been coached or had words put into their mouth. Nevertheless, it was still the case that some fine portraits that achieved all this ended up in the Media Bar.

Many of the non-fiction programs that don't fit into the “portrait” style, have a regular host who can make or break the show. We were interested in the different approaches to on-air talent for this age group. We saw a range of puppets, some super talented children in hosting roles, as well as adults with a genuine gift for speaking directly to the child watching at home. There were many different approaches to hosting, both from the hair/make up/wardrobe point of view, to the overall energy of the presentation (where too much can be distracting and too little can make a 7 minute show seem to go for a very long time!) In a number of programs children were put under stress – in a gameshow challenge, on an outdoors challenge, or learning a new skill – and we were impressed with the way we saw fear, nerves, focus and adrenalin up close and handled with empathy and skill to reinforce the concepts of perseverance and resilience. The natural world comes into its own for this age group and we had some great discussion about the way different hosts were able to engage with the wildlife itself as well as the viewing audience. We also came away determined to make more compost and eliminate plastic.

We were engaged by shows which explored important issues from a child's perspective and these included the environment, the role of social media and its impact on our mental health generally



and diverse communities. We saw some different approaches to philosophy and ethical dilemmas for children, some of which gave children an opportunity to use their own voice to explore different approaches to the same problem. We applaud the entertaining approaches we saw in exploring history for children and we would love to have seen more genuine news for children.

We hope that Prix Jeunesse participants enjoy our final selection in June, but we also hope that they have time to visit the Media Bar, especially if they are interested in this category. Due to time constraints, we couldn't short list all the shows we loved, and there are some real gems in there, so it is worth checking them out.

Category 7 – 10 Years Fiction

by Nils Stokke, CEO of Spark, Norway

The 7-10 Fiction category had close to 90 entries this year. Some were only five minutes, other were almost an hour long. We had more animated shows than live action entries, and we enjoyed several puppet shows too. Because of the range of genres and styles, and the numbers of entries, the category was challenging to jury. After all, with just fourteen shows reaching the finals, only one out of six shows could make it. We made some hard decisions and had plenty of intense arguments throughout the screenings. We screened several great shows about local kids with universal struggles. The kid in «3 feet» (Colombia) had to balance between the school's strict uniform rules and his love for soccer, «Katy/Wild» (UK) told a story of a girl who had to live with her step mother, «Tail end of the year» (Taiwan) was an aesthetically wonderful episode about a kid who is different than her class mates, and «Guardian Monster» (Argentina), handled bullying in an excellent manner. We were deeply touched by the «Star of Andra and Tati» (Italy) and «Chika, the dog from the ghetto» (Germany), both set during the World War II. Several shows had stories where strong friendships were at the core of the story. In «Swing» (Serbia), a local boy befriends two migrants on the run. «Seven little criminals» (Netherlands) is an Ocean's Eleven-esque crime story about a group of friends planning to rob the local bank, and in «Ghostwriter» (US), four kids are brought together when a ghost contact them through books. «The whale and the snail» (UK) was among several shows with amazing production value, but «3feet» proved you don't need a high budget to tell a great story. Kids, like grown-ups, like to laugh, and kids will have several reasons to laugh watching the finalists. «Hardball» (Australia) made the pre-selectors giggle again and again, yet it also told a great story. And «Snoopy in space» (US) brought back the funny classic cartoon in a refreshing new setting.

There may be plenty of reasons why a show didn't reach the final selection. We watched many shows where the story was told through words, not pictures, something we mostly considered to be a weakness. Furthermore, we thought shows with a predominately adult cast have a harder time communicating with the target group. Another reoccurring discussion in the pre-selection groups was one-offs vs series. With the possibility of telling a clear story from the beginning to an end, one-



offs tend to be favored in screenings over series where the we only see one episode. Yet, we were pleased to see some of the strongest pieces in the category this year were series. Needless to say, with only one out of six shows making it to the finals, the shows really had to stand out to be chosen, both in terms of story and production quality. There were several truly great shows that deserved to be a finalist but didn't make it. We strongly urge you to read through the Media bar list and the jury members' recommendations.

Category Up to 6 Years Non-Fiction

by Hsiao Pei Lin, Producer, Public Television Service Taiwan

This time, we saw 40 or more programs from 27 different countries in the category of Up to 6 Non-Fiction. We can see all sorts of elements within these brilliant works, such as cute animals, gigantic but charming machines, science experimentations, crafts and music. These elements might seem to be common, but the protagonists in these stories brought magic and fun into the narratives, whether it's a magical watermelon, an egg that is facing precarious danger, or a teddy bear that can cure your illness. Stories like these bring creativity into the final result.

When it comes to ways of manifestations, aside from animations, documentaries, magazine formats, and studio game shows, we also spot some very creative attempts such as the combination of concert and guessing games. There is one beautiful work using time-lapse photography and still-image filmmaking to reveal the profound beauty of nature.

Due to the recognition developments of kids under the age of six, the color, brightness, movements and sound of a show can be crucial and challenging. We saw some toddlers' programs that set wonderful examples for shows in this category, they are not only artistic but also have the ability to help young children understand and process the information effectively.

In the category of Up to 6 Non-Fiction, despite the audience's relatively young ages, we still see a lot of shows that encourage young kids to "get up and be active". The young protagonists are doers, learners, but also thinkers and feelers. The positive interactions between kids in the shows make the programs undeniably magical.

Seeing a doctor is an everlasting topic in children's television. We saw some shows introduce the "scary" process of seeing a doctor with a children-friendly tone and language, along with props that kids can touch and fondle with, the cuddly Teddy Doctor will even tell you where your caecum is!

At last, we definitely also have some long-term successful children's shows in this selection. These shows exhibit high production values as always, with years of consistency. Every participant can admire these shows in the media bar.

Category Up to 6 Years Fiction

by Martina Pestaj, Head of Children's and Youth Programme at RTV Slovenija, Slovenia

We saw 91 programmes, made for the very first group of TV viewers. 91 stories, which communicate with children, bring them the magic of secret places, fun of every day's life, try to teach them mathematics and empathy, tickle their aesthetic sensibility and make them laugh.

Some of them made us laugh, too. Some of them made us think and discuss very hard, some of them passed by quickly. But all of them shared the feeling of great importance of creating high quality TV for preschool children. And we were very glad to see that there are many professionals who create it with all their knowledge, responsibility and sincerely from the heart.

Most of the programmes were animations, all kind of styles and topics. They were dealing with simple things that matter children the most: relations in families and between friends, emotions in themselves and others, playing always and as much as possible. Some of them were playing with shapes and sizes and colors, some of them with words. There were a little bit crazy, colourful, simple stories and classical stories from very specific cultural places and times.

We saw beautiful specials, some of them based upon books, bringing them on a new level. The main characters were teddies, bugs and dogs, forest, jungle and savannah animals, fairy tale creatures, little girls and boys and even number blocks.

We greeted a rising number of topics showing diversity and acceptance in the animated society. We met single parent, extended and same-sex parent families and they all were bringing fresh ways of thinking about the life around us. The stories of indigenous people of Alaska and Australia brought together different generations, showed the magic of the culture and told the truth about death in a very sensible way.

Puppets are still popular in this age group, we saw some good examples, but most of them inspired by puppets from Muppet Show, which are certainly the most lively puppets on the world.

Live action series for small children with small children acting made us think about challenges of working with small children. We admire fresh and funny programmes which found a way to bring together a boy and a dinosaur and another one with princesses and a dragon. Stories from every

day's life were told in a very intimate way, showing almost child's inner world through his/her play and relation with a parent or friend. Directors and little actors did a great job!

We saw some good examples of hybrids, bringing together life action and animation, using the best out of each. They made way for gentle toys and prehistoric animals to come alive and play important role in a day of a girl or a boy.

What we discussed most is a big number of programmes with adults acting in it. Sometimes there was no kid at all and we missed it. And sometimes kids were even played by young adults. They were overacting, trying to be silly and funny to attract children, but did they really succeed? And do we need to build houses of poo to make children laugh? Everybody should look for him/herself.

Children from different sides of the world live very different types of life, but they all play, feel, act and knead their imagination in a similar ways. We saw the whole beauty of this in the programmes we had the honor to watch.

