

PEN Presents Assessment Form

Introduction

PEN Presents is an English PEN programme that funds the often-unpaid work of creating sample translations, gives UK publishers access to titles from underrepresented languages and regions by showcasing selected samples on a digital platform, and aims to help diversify the translated literature landscape.

For this round of PEN Presents, literary translators have been invited to submit proposals for sample translations of works of any language, region, form, genre and era, not yet published in English translation.

A shortlist of 13 proposals has been chosen by the PEN Presents Selection Panel – a rotating group of seven individuals, drawn from across the literary sector – and all shortlisted translators have been awarded a £500 grant to create a 5,000-word sample translation of the proposed work. The Panel will select 6 samples from the shortlist to be showcased on the PEN Presents online platform, and promoted to UK publishers by English PEN.

As a PEN Presents assessor, you are being asked to provide a report and recommendation to the Panel, based on the sample translation and its respective passage in the original work.

Throughout the process, applications are considered against assessment criteria:

- **Literary quality (40% weighting)**

We aim to support the translation of literature of outstanding literary merit. At shortlisting stage, this criterion will be judged on the evidence of the applicant’s proposal and on reviews and reception of the original work. At final selection stage, it will also be judged on the quality of the sample, and an expert assessor’s evaluation of the sample against the original work.

- **Strength of the project (30% weighting)**

We aim to support projects with the potential to be successfully published in the Anglophone market. Across shortlisting and final selection stages, this criterion will be judged on the applicant’s rationale for the work’s place in the Anglophone market, evidence of sales and success in the original, the fit of the translator for the project, and other aspects of the proposal that the Panel deem relevant to considering the project’s viability.

- **Contribution to bibliodiversity (30% weighting)**

We aim to support the translation of books that contribute to the diversity of the literary landscape– books that might not otherwise be published and read; from languages and regions, of forms, genres and themes, and by voices underrepresented in Anglophone publishing.



Across shortlisting and final selection stages, this criterion will be judged based on all aspects of the project.

English PEN is asking you to assess this PEN Presents submission with regard to Criterion 1, Literary Quality. You will provide a report, responding to questions about particular aspects of the proposal, sample and original work. (The assessment of Criteria 2 and 3, Strength of the Project and Contribution to Bibliodiversity, will mainly be assessed by the Selection Panel.)

At the end of your written report, you are asked to provide an overall score of 1-10 for Criterion 1, Literary Quality, which indicates how strongly you would/would not recommend this sample for selection. Details on how to arrive at an overall score are provided.

For samples that are ultimately included in the final selection, information about / reflections on the project will be included alongside the sample published on the English PEN website. As part of this, at the end of the form you are asked to provide a max. 300-word **public-facing** reflection on the positive aspects of the project. **You are asked to indicate whether, if the project is selected, you would like your name to be attached to this reflection/recommendation, or would like the reflection/recommendation to appear anonymously.**

Throughout your assessment, please avoid reproducing or paraphrasing information from the translator's application, and instead offer independent critical evaluation of the information provided.

If you have any questions, please contact Will Forrester: will@englishpen.org

Project and assessor details

Name of assessor:	Assessor
Name/s of shortlisted translator/s:	The Translator
Name of author of original work:	The Author
Title of work (in English translation):	Book A

Report

<p><u>Section 1:</u></p> <p>Please provide your assessment of the translation sample provided. Do you think the sample is a strong translation? Having read the original passage, do you think the translator/s has/have done a good job?</p> <p>We encourage you to recognise the subjectivity of literary translation, and that balance between faithfulness to source language and fluency in target language is a complex issue. Please do not offer subjective commentary on specific translation choices, or suggest alternative translations for passages.</p>	<p>The translation is very promising. It is filled with moments of artful, thoughtful craft. The translator has a clear understanding of the original both textually and contextually, and, for the most part, confidently conveys the tension of the original in their translation choices.</p> <p>The translator has stayed true to the sentence structure and the staccato flow of the original, conveying the disjointed feeling the author intended. The story is successfully built through the sample and mimics the traditions and style of the original language perfectly.</p> <p>I have only a few concerns about some translation decisions. In an attempt to reproduce the original flow, translation choices occasionally result in incoherence and clunkiness; while the translator mostly makes a compelling virtue of the original style and the work’s translatedness, these few moments privilege this a little too far, and create a disruption of flow and sense that isn’t reflective of the original passages. These are only minor issues, however, and can likely be rectified with a solid edit.</p>
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FREEDOM
TO WRITE
FREEDOM
TO READ

Section 2:

Please provide an assessment of the passage in the original. We would like you to make a value judgement about the literary quality of the original passage in question. Is it well-written?

From your reading of the short sample of the original, would you agree or disagree with the translator's proposal in how it characterises the work?

The author is well-known in their home region and is widely celebrated as a master of their genre. This text in particular is an exceptional example of their craft, bringing together local folklore and horror in a genre-defying work.

The original text is incredibly well-written, and was well received in its home country more than twenty years ago.

The author, while being celebrated in their own country, has not been widely translated into English (the last published English translation of their writing was in 1999.) I agree with the translator in that it is a real that this author has not yet been spotlighted, given how well this language is currently faring in literary translation in the UK. I agree with the translator that there is no better time than now for this author to be translated into English.

Section 3 (any additional comments):

Please provide any additional comments you have from your reading of the proposal, sample and original passage.

This can be in terms of the style, voice, genre, form, cultural context, etc.; how you feel an English translation of the work would be received by an Anglophone readership; any concerns regarding sensitivity or how the work engages with issues of diversity in its original context; any additional information not included in the proposal you feel is of relevance; or anything else that you feel the Selection Panel should be aware of.

As the translator has noted, now is a better time than ever to introduce a voice such as this author to English readers.

This book has been successful because a) it subverts uncomplicated ideas about this genre, and b) it draws on the folklore of the community in a ways not done before, showcasing the rich culture of the people of country X and the storytelling traditions that have long gone unnoticed. The style, tone and voice of this work are singular, even within the local sphere, and will be enjoyed by those who like to read fantasy as well as horror.

The translator is clearly passionate about this title, and I believe that they have the ability to make this project viable with the right editorial guidance and mentorship.

I have no issues with the sensitivity of this work.



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Score and recommendation

Please score this application from 1 to 10, using the scale explained below. This score is exclusively for Criterion 1, Literary Quality. Please provide a final recommendation to the Selection Panel.

1	No Literary Quality	Very strongly advise not awarding a selecting	The sample and original passage are incredibly poor.
2	Very weak Literary Quality	Strongly advise not selecting	The sample and original passage are very poor.
3	Weak Literary Quality	Advise not selecting	The sample and original passage translation have limited merit. Or one aspect is good, but the other is very poor.
4	Limited Literary Quality	Tentatively advise not selecting	The sample and original passage are mediocre.
5	Some Literary Quality	On balance, very tentatively advise not selecting	The sample and original passage have some merit. Or one aspect is very good, but the other is weak.
6	Good Literary Quality	On balance, very tentatively recommend selecting	The sample and original passage are good, but not incredibly compelling. Or one aspect is very strong, but the other only has some merit.
7	Fairly Strong Literary Quality	Tentatively selecting	The sample and original passage are very good, but not outstanding. Or one aspect is very strong, but the other only good.
8	Strong Literary Quality	Recommend selecting	The sample and original passage are very strong. Or one aspect is exceptional, but the other is only strong.
9	Very strong Literary Quality	Strongly recommend selecting	The sample and original passage are incredibly strong.
10	Exceptional Literary Quality	Very strongly recommend selecting	The sample and original passage are exceptional.

Score for this proposal in terms of Literary Quality:	8
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<p>Please give a max. 300-word reflection on the positives of the project, which can be used in public-facing material about the sample if it included in the final selection.</p>	<p>The translator handles this unique text with tact and confidence. The translation beautifully conveys the suspense and atmosphere of the original text and has a real sense of place, honouring the voice and rythmn of the original text.</p>	
	<p>This is a fantastic translation of a stunning, genre-defining yet genre-defying work, and will bring an exciting literary powerhouse of this language to UK readers.</p>	
<p>Please indicate whether you are happy for your name to be publicly attached (on the English PEN website) to this short reflection if the sample is included in the final selection, or if you would like to remain anonymous.</p>	<p>Publicly include my name next to the reflection/ recommendation if the work is included in the final selection.</p>	<p>Do not include my name, and instead share the reflection/ recommendation anonymously.</p>



FREEDOM
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FREEDOM
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(Optional) Please share any final comments about your score/recommendation for use only as part of the process (i.e., that will not appear publicly).	
Assessor name:	
Signed: (e-signature or printed name)	
Date:	