



## Twenty years of illustration awards for children's and young adults' books in Spain

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**Abstract.** In recent decades, illustration in children's and young adults' books has become especially important as a communicative and educational element. This has led to a proliferation of illustrated books and albums, as well as to an increase in the number of prizes and awards for them. This development has given the figure of the illustrator greater prominence and serves as an instrument for promotion and visibility, as well as a stimulus to production. Accordingly, the objective of this article is to set out the characteristics of Spanish children's and young adults' book awards focused on illustration within the 2000–2020 period, indicating their chronology, their organizers, the illustrators who have received the most awards, the thematic categories that are most commonly represented and the prize types and sums awarded to winners. To this end, a list of 103 Spanish children's and young adults' literature awards was compiled; 22 of these are specifically for illustration. The conclusion was reached that Spanish publishers are opting for illustrated books and albums that they themselves have produced. It was also found that such awards have consolidated over time, are normally of an institutional nature and offer small financial sums. Moreover, all kinds of thematic categories are represented in these awards, though fictional prose works clearly predominate, and within this category, awards most commonly go to illustrated albums.

**Keywords:** Children's and young adults' literature illustrations awards; Children's and young adults' literature illustrators; Children's and young adults' literature; Children's and youth adults' illustrated books Picture Books; Literature awards

### [es] 20 años de premios de ilustración infantil y juvenil en España

**Resumen.** En las últimas décadas, la ilustración en los libros infantiles y juveniles ha cobrado especial importancia como elemento comunicativo y educativo. Esto ha supuesto la proliferación de libros y álbumes ilustrados, así como la multiplicación de premios y galardones. Este hecho otorga mayor proyección a la figura del ilustrador, está sirviendo como instrumento de promoción y visibilidad, así como un estímulo a la producción. Por ello, el objetivo de este artículo es dar a conocer las características de los premios infantiles y juveniles especializados en ilustración en España, entre el año 2000 y el 2020, mostrar su cronología, quién los convoca, quienes son los ilustradores más premiados, las materias más representadas, la dotación y cuantía de los mismos. Para ello se ha elaborado un listado de 103 premios de literatura infantil y juvenil españoles, de los cuales 22 están especializados en ilustración. Se llega a la conclusión de que los editores están apostando por

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libros y álbumes ilustrados de producción propia. Además, se trata de premios consolidados en el tiempo, normalmente de tipo institucional, con una dotación económica reducida, en los que están representadas todas las materias, con un predominio claro de la narrativa y dentro de esta, aquellos otorgados al álbum ilustrado.

**Palabras Clave:** Premios a la ilustración infantil y juvenil. Ilustradores infantiles y juveniles; Literatura infantil y juvenil; Libros infantiles y juveniles ilustrados; Álbumes ilustrados. Premios literarios.

**Sumay:** 1. Introduction. 2. Objectives and methodology. 3. Analysis and discussion. 4. Conclusions. 5. References.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, illustration in children's and young adults' books has become especially important as a communicative element. The image completes the story and, as it is the case with the illustrated album, it plays such an essential role that it assumes most of the narrative responsibility (Salisbury, 2014), as it combines both communicative media: text and image (Duran, 2009).

*There is a growing awareness of the educational role of illustration, and perhaps for this reason it has been becoming increasingly important in editorial creations for children and young people, going from an auxiliary element—a supporting resource for the text—to an integral part of the narration (Arellano, 2008: 1)*

Specialists in children's and young adults' literature (hereafter CYAL) have tried to define and characterize illustration in works of this kind as a genre, defining it as “a specific art with its own identity and its own place within the complex reality known as Children's and Young Adults' Literature” (García Padrino, 2004: 17).

Perhaps for this reason, there has been a significant increase in publishing of illustrated books and albums for little ones. Such works are becoming one of the most typical forms of CYAL. And in Spain, both large publishing groups and small specialist imprints are opting to produce their own versions of works of this type, these having traditionally been produced outside of Spain.<sup>ii</sup>

As Fernández (2010: 20) states, these are *times of enthusiasm and great creativity. Calatayud and his colleagues (Balzola, Ruano, Solé, Ginesta, Wensell, Alonso, Joma, Gabán, Serrano, Jiménez, Capdevila, Ballester, Boix and Gusti, among others) laid the foundations for the country's best children's-book illustration, which still has still not been surpassed. However, a changing of the guard is clearly underway, with the arrival of a new generation of creators and with a change of attitude among publishers, which, after a long period of limited*

*production of their own illustrated books, have entered a process of reviewing how they do things, from which interesting initiatives have emerged in recent years*

Along with the increase in publishing output, we are also witnessing the proliferation of prizes and awards specializing in these works. These initiatives have managed, among other things, to give greater prominence to the figure of the illustrator and are not only serving as an instrument for promoting and lending visibility to mediators and readers but also stimulating production of these works.

*The market for children's literature involves large annual publication numbers and, in general, its books do not have a very long life. It is not always easy to find books from four or five years ago: few survive the test of time. Hence, recommendation-making bodies, specialist serials and awards are an important reference point for literary mediators (families, teachers, librarians, etc.) and therefore more than a potential matrix for canonicity. (Larragueta Arribas, 2019: 311).*

At present, over a hundred literary contests are held in Spain with the aim of encouraging creation and creativity as well as of highlighting the excellence of particular CYAL titles, including some focused on illustration. It is necessary to understand and characterize these awards. To this end, the objectives of this article are, on the one hand, to collect, identify, classify and analyse CYAL prizes for illustration or illustrators awarded in Spain or by Spanish institutions or companies between 2000 and 2020, and on the other to ascertain their evolution over time, their validity, their modalities, the sums handed out as prizes, the institutions that convene them and so forth.

## **2. Objectives and methodology**

The first step entailed drawing up a list of Spain's national, regional and local CYAL awards that are currently still running and cover any of the official State languages (Spanish, Catalan, Basque and Galician). To do so, the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sports's Map of Literary Awards <http://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/mapaapf/premioMapa.do?cache=init&layout=mapapremio&language=es> was used; this search was supplemented by tracing awards in other sources—for example:

- The National Library of Spain ([http://www.bne.es/es/Microsites/Guias/Literatura\\_Infantil/index.html](http://www.bne.es/es/Microsites/Guias/Literatura_Infantil/index.html))
- Literary contests from escritores.org (<https://www.escriitores.org/concursos/concursos-1/concursos-literarios>)
- Spanish Organization of Children's and Young Adults' Books (Organización Española del Libro Infantil y Juvenil; OEPLI) and its corresponding sections for Spain's autonomous regions.
- Specialized serials and news reports from the general press. Publishers' and digital libraries' websites.

The study's first result was a list comprising 118 awards, from which awards that are now defunct (15) were removed, leaving a final total of 103 awards.

Once this first list had been obtained, the awards were filtered to obtain both illustrated books—that is, those in which the narrative force resides in the text and the illustrations expand on, accompany or accentuate an idea—and illustrated albums, in which the essential language for understanding the story is visual (Ramírez Herrera, 2021). This filtering yielded a total of 22 awards.

- City of Alicante Illustrated Album (Álbum ilustrado ciudad de Alicante) Prize
- Booksellers Guild of Madrid Illustrated Album Prize (Álbum Ilustrado del Gremio de Libreros de Madrid)
- Apel.les.Mestres Prize
- Apila First Impression Prize (Apila Primera Impresión)
- Catholic Commission for Children Prize (Comisión Católica de la Infancia) Isabel Niño CCEI Illustration Prize (CCEI. Isabel Niño. Ilustración)
- City of Castelló Tombatossals Illustrated Children's Literature Prize (Ciutat de Castelló de Literatura Infantil Ilustrada Tombatossals)
- Etxepare Illustrated Album Prize (Etxepare de álbum ilustrado)
- Fina Casalderey Children's Literature Equality Prize (Fina Casalderey de Literatura Infantil Pola Igualdade)
- Galician Book Gala Illustrated Book Prize (Gala do libro Galego Libro Ilustrado)
- Sant Joan de Déu Hospital Prize (Hospital Sant Joan de Déu)
- Insular Library International Prize (Internacional Biblioteca Insular)
- Compostela International Prize (Internacional Compostela)
- SM Foundation International Illustration Prize / SM Foundation/Bologna International Illustration Prize (Internacional de Ilustración Fundación SM / Internacional de Bolonia/Fundación SM)
- City of Benicarló International Illustrated Prize (Internacional Ilustrado Ciudad de Benicarló)
- Junceda Illustration Prize for Fiction (Junceda de ilustración. Ficción)
- Junceda International Prize (Junceda Internacional)
- Junceda Popular Science Children's Book Prize (Junceda libro infantil de divulgación y ciencia)
- Lazarillo Album Prize (Lazarillo álbum)
- Children's and Young Adults' Books Best Illustrations Prize (Mejores ilustraciones de libros infantiles y juveniles)
- Mercé Llimona Prize
- National Illustration Prize (Nacional ilustración)
- Pura and Dora Vázquez Fiction and Illustration Prize (Narración e ilustración Pura e Dora Vázquez)

The following information was collected for each award:

- Name and date of creation
- Typology: institutional, private or mixed.

- Convening entity or publisher
- Language: that recorded in the award's eligibility terms. The awards convened in Valencian have been included in Catalan.
- Category: unpublished or published
- Prize type: financial or honorary
- Prize amount: sum stipulated in the announcement for the most recent edition of the award.

We also identified the winning titles in the Spanish ISBN Database, collecting the following information:

- Title
- Publisher
- Award
- Year award given
- Year of edition
- Thematic category. An adapted classification table was made, taking as a reference point the classification table of the Torrente Ballester Municipal Library in Salamanca (Spain). Classifications were made via a title-by-title search in this library's catalogue and in the union catalogue of the Spanish Public Libraries.

### **3. Analysis and discussion**

#### **3.1. Chronological evolution**

Based on the data collected, it was confirmed that between the 1950s and the 1990s, scarcely any prizes for illustration were created—four awards in forty years. However, it should be noted that three of those awards, still running today, were ground breaking and continue to maintain great prestige within the modality: the Lazarillo Illustrated Album Prize (1958)<sup>iii</sup> awarded by the OEPLI; the CCEI (Isabel Niño) Prize for Illustration, run by the Catholic Commission for Children (1996); and the *Apel.les.Mestres* Prize, created by the publisher Destino in 1981 in tribute to the Catalan modernist writer and illustrator *Apel.les.Mestres*.

An upward trend that began in the 1990s can be observed, and within just ten years the same quantity of awards, four, was created as had been during the previous forty. Sant Joan de Déu Hospital Prize (1998) and the SM Foundation International Illustration Prize (1991), currently the SM Foundation/Bologna International Prize (1998), Mercé Llimona (1998) y Ciudat de Castelló de Literatura Infantil Ilustrada Tombatossals (1999)

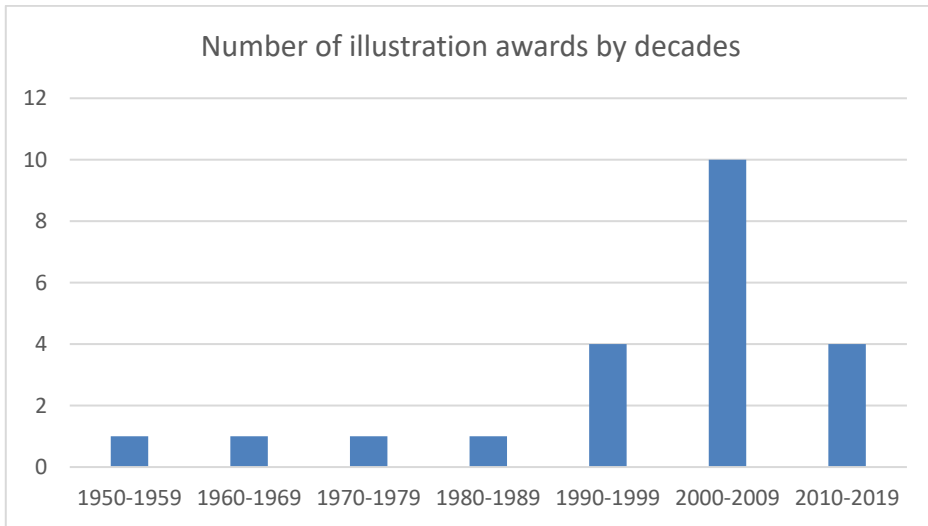


Fig. 1 Number of illustration awards by decades

Source: Compiled by the authors

As is the case for CYAL awards in general, the twenty-first century brought with it an observable growth in the number of awards (14). This development coincides with the “golden age” of illustrated albums. The trend continues to the present day, and it has additionally been stimulated by the fact that the idea that these works are only for children is now a thing of the past, which has consequently opened them up to the adult market.

*New collections and new publishers, as well as prizes for this specific modality within the broad concept of children’s literature—or, to be more accurate, of literary editions intended for children—have contributed very effectively to this new “risorgimento.” The forgetting or abandoning that, during the previous decade, made various voices speak up to demand a fair place for illustrated albums within the offering of publications designed for younger readers seems to have been put behind us (García Padrino, 2007: 1)*

It is not possible to break down the figures on the basis of whether works are illustrated books or albums because these details are subsumed into CYAL editions in general, but all publishers indicate that since the beginning of the twenty-first century albums, at least, have been experiencing a “golden age” that is being felt across editorial production: *“Beyond their most directly intended audience, [illustrated albums are] rebelling against age recommendations and overcoming them by increasing the quantity of works that are suitable for different reading levels at the same time and offering a space for artistic experimentation and freedom, which demands an active and critical reader in line with the new digital age” (Borda, 2002).*

In the last twenty years, we have also seen the creation of awards in co-official languages—for example, the Etxepare Illustrated Album Prize (2004) for Basque, or the Galician Book Gala Illustrated Book Prize (2016) for Galician. These awards have helped to consolidate and promote these languages and brought works and creators to people’s attention.

### 3.2. Typology

In terms of typology, 59% (13) are institutional, 9% private (2) and 32% (9) a mix of institutions and private companies. These percentages replicate the traits of CYAL awards in general, 62% of which are institutional.<sup>iv</sup>

*In Spain, awards have been the most helpful resource for public administrations and cultural entities to allocate part of their budgets to activities that, presumably, could give them a projection and visibility that is often non-existent, thanks not so much to the winning names, but to the fact of the award’s existence (Muñoz-Rico, 2020)*

The most prestigious awards figure among the institutional prizes—for example, the Lazarillo Prize, the CCEI Prize and the National Illustration Prize, although the latter recognizes the career of an illustrator and not a specific title.

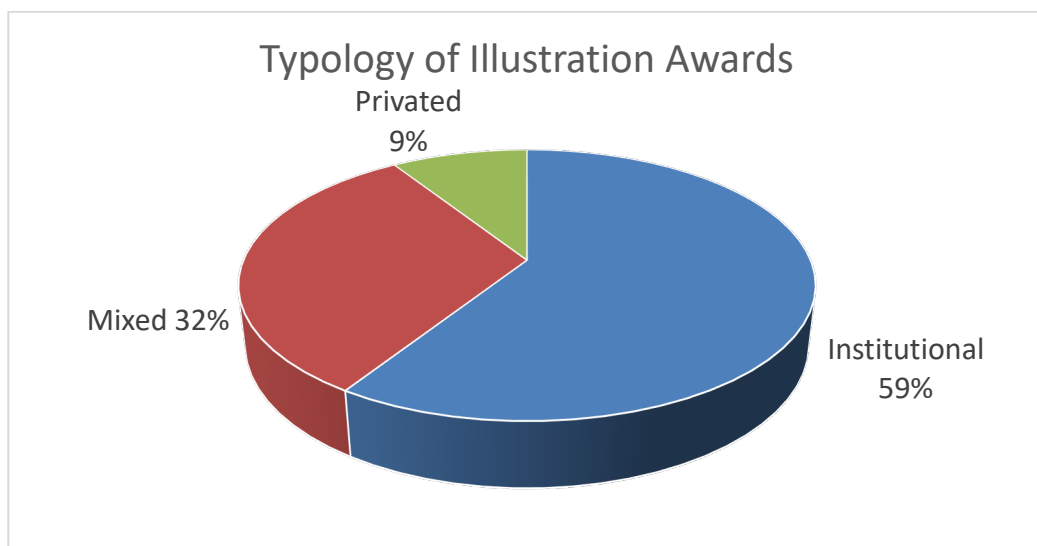


Fig. 2 Typology of Illustration Awards  
Source: Compiled by the authors

Mixed prizes have proliferated in the CYAL world in recent years, probably as a way to share the funding of the prizes handed out. Among these are the *Apel.les.Mestres* Prize (the publisher Destino and Atresmedia), the Insular Library International Prize (Gran Canaria Council and the publisher Buen Paso), the

Compostela International Prize (Santiago de Compostela City Council and the publisher Kalandraka) and the Sant Joan de Déu Hospital Prize (Sant Joan de Déu Hospital and the publisher Planeta).

Awards granted by publishers tend to have a greater impact among readers and on sales figures and print runs. In the case of illustration, only two prizes are awarded by publishers: the SM Foundation International Prize (currently SM Foundation/Bologna International Prize) and the Edelvives international illustration Prize. On the other hand, the historical link to CYAL and the desire to open up a booming market have meant that publishers have clearly tilted their prizes towards illustrated albums, with these awards sometimes being run, as mentioned, in collaboration with public institutions (Llorens, 2013).

### 3.3. Most-awarded illustrators and works

Awards for illustrated CYAL works, along with an increased presence of them at book fairs, have strengthened the illustration sector and brought about an expansion of the set of creators who make CYAL works. They have also heightened recognition of these creators' works and professional careers.

We identified a total of two hundred award-winning illustrators, twenty-six of which have won an award more than once: Mariona Cabassa and Gusti (Gustavo Ariel) on four occasions, Francesc Rovira and Jokin Mitxelena on three and another twenty-two creators on two occasions. In the latter case, several of the winners have won the same prize on different occasions, above all in the case of regional prizes, whose rules specify a particular language for entries.

However, it is noteworthy that great illustrators on the Spanish scene who have received the National Illustration Award (Table 1) or who have been Spanish nominees for the Andersen Award (Elena Odriozola, Miguelanxo Prado, Javier Zabala, Xan López Domínguez, Ulises Wensell, Javier Serrano, Francisco Meléndez and Miguel Calatayud) do not appear in this list. This may be because they won their prizes prior to the year 2000, or because the data have been collected according to specific works and not when a prize was awarded for a creator's whole oeuvre. It must also be taken into account that several illustrators have received awards in other categories. For example, Elena Odriozola received the Hang Glider (Ala Delta) Prize in 2005 and the Reading is Living (Leer es vivir) YA Prize in 2002.

Table 1 Winners of the National Illustration Award 2008–2021

| Year | Illustrator                |
|------|----------------------------|
| 2021 | Viví Escrivá               |
| 2020 | Sonia Pulido               |
| 2019 | Paco Giménez               |
| 2018 | Maria Rius                 |
| 2017 | Alfredo González (Alfredo) |



|             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| <b>2016</b> | Javier Sáez Castán  |
| <b>2015</b> | Elena Odriozola     |
| <b>2014</b> | José Ramón Sánchez  |
| <b>2013</b> | Carme Solé Vendrell |
| <b>2012</b> | Andrés Rábago       |
| <b>2011</b> | Emilio Urberuaga    |
| <b>2010</b> | Ana Juan            |
| <b>2009</b> | Miguel Calatayud    |
| <b>2008</b> | Arnal Ballester     |

Source: <https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultura/libro/premios/listado-de-premios/premios-nacionales/ilustracion/presentacion.html>

In terms of winning works, upon a complete analysis of all the titles, it was found that none obtained a high number of awards. The only titles to win more than one award are Lluís Farre's *El nen gris*, illustrated by Gusti and published by La Galera, which won the Sant Joan de Déu Hospital Prize in 2006 and the Junceda Prize for Illustration in 2007, and *Os corpos invisibles (Xerais)* by Emma Pedreira, which won an award in two categories (children's and young adults' book and Illustrated book), at the 2020 Galician Book Gala.

In an analysis from a gender-sensitive perspective, no data has been observed that indicates any differences between the awards given to men or women, since they represent about 50% in each case.

The data are particularly meaningful when we consider the country of origin, as only 25 of the award winners are foreigners, a factor that proves the outstanding work of Spanish illustrators and that is also made evident by the number and variety of exhibitions featuring their children's works.

### 3.4. Language of publication

Regarding the language of publication, approximately 50% of the publications are in Spanish. The second largest number of publications is in Catalan, a language with a longer tradition as regards the number of prizes awarded and with significant institutional support. Books in Galician and Basque represent a minority in comparison to the two previous languages, however, it must be pointed out that those published simultaneously in the four co-official languages of the Spanish state must be added to those mentioned above.

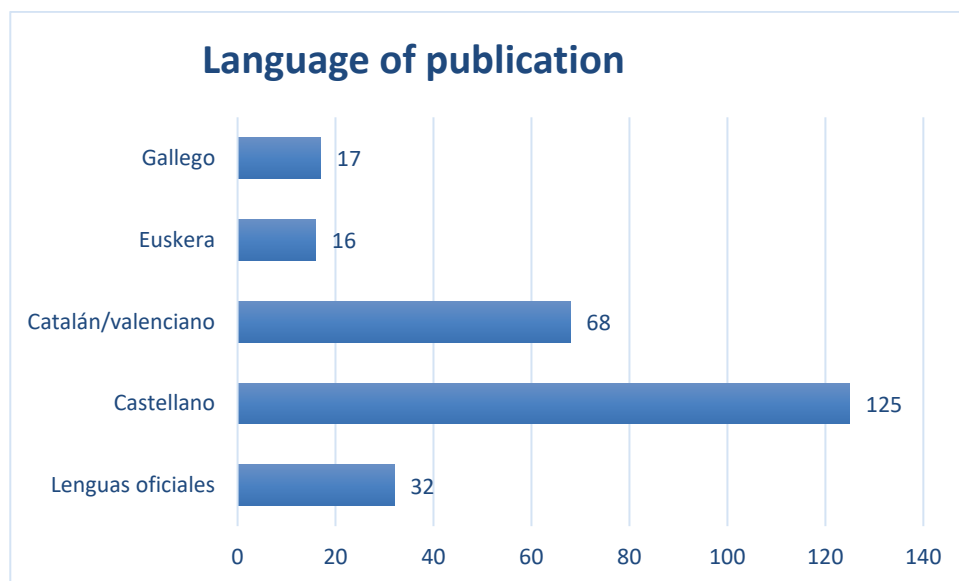


Fig. 3 Language of publication  
Source: Compiled by the authors

### 3.5. Thematic categories

At present, practically all themes are represented in the Spanish illustrated book and album publishing market, though this is not so much the case in terms of genres, with prose fiction predominating over poetry or theatre. Prizes for prose fiction, whether in the form of short stories or novels, continue to be the most common, as is the case with CYAL awards in general. There are scarcely any for poetry (four titles) or theatre (one title). Nonfiction works only appear among the titles considered by the Junceda Popular Science Children's Book Prize.

In terms of themes, it was observed that the usual CYAL trends—real life (32%), fantasy (22%) and animals as main characters (15%)—are the most common, followed, very far behind, by mystery, suspense or horror (8%) and the classics plus adaptations thereof (7%). However, it must be taken into account that, although the thematic classification is the same as it is for higher reading levels, the fact that most of the works are aimed at children under six or eight years of age means that, for example, the real-life category includes all works that focus on day-to-day activities at school, at home, in the park and so on and that, in the case of horror and mystery titles, these are limited to dealing with childhood fears or have monsters that are scary to varying degrees as protagonists.

It should be noted that many publishers continue to draw on traditional stories and works featuring (normally humanized) animals when creating books for early readers, as well as on another recurring theme, fantasy, represented by fairy tales and other types of fantastical characters. In recent years, there has also been

an increase in prizes awarded to works related to ecology and love of nature and animals; these account for 3% of titles (nine titles).

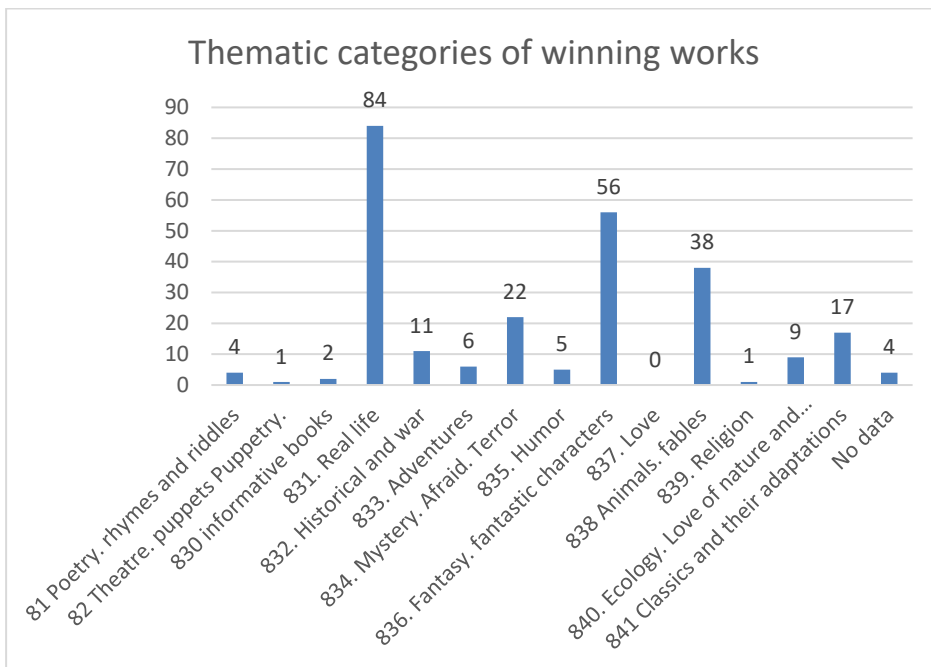


Fig. 4 Thematic category of winning works  
Source: Compiled by the authors

### 3.6. Category and prize sums

An award's financial prize, which is usually linked to its importance, is a stimulus for creators, who in most cases do not exclusively create CYAL because, with few exceptions, it does not usually entail large incomes.

In 61% of cases, prizes are awarded to original works, and it is common for part of the financial award to be an advance on royalties. In total, 35% of prizes are awarded to works that have already been published; these prizes are normally honorary in nature, whether or not they include a financial reward.

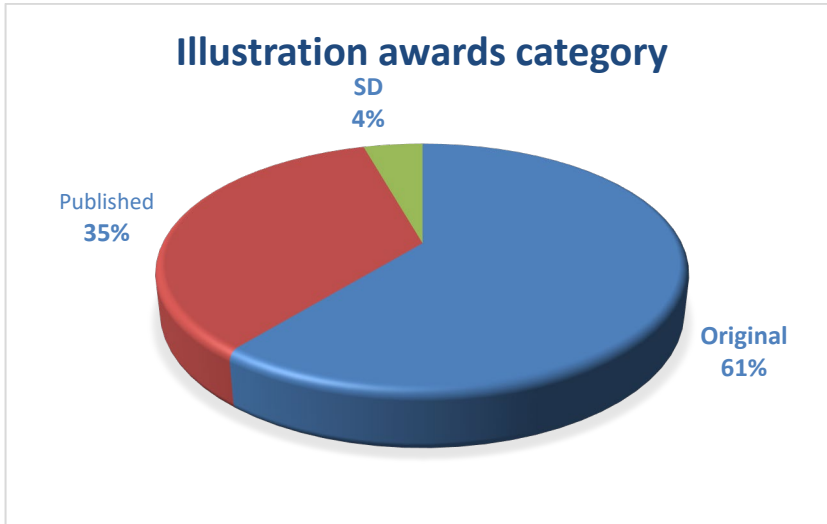


Fig. 5 Illustration Awards Category  
Source: Compiled by the authors

For seven of the awards, the prize handed out is between five thousand and ten thousand euros; in four cases it is less than 4,999 euros; and only four exceed the barrier of ten thousand euros (the Insular Library International Prize; the Children's and Young Adults' Books Best Illustrations Prize; the National Illustration Prize; and the SM Foundation International Illustration Prize, the latter offering the largest prize: thirty thousand euros).

These amounts can be considered small if one takes into account, as has already been mentioned, that they include advances on the work's publishing royalties. If one adds to this the fact that print runs for children's books, and more so for albums, are usually small (5,719 copies on average, according to *Comercio Interior del Libro 2020–2021*), it can be stated that there are few illustrators who will find the sums offered by awards to be sufficient so as to focus exclusively on children's illustration. In most cases, therefore, these creators' field is both illustration in general and graphic design or advertising.

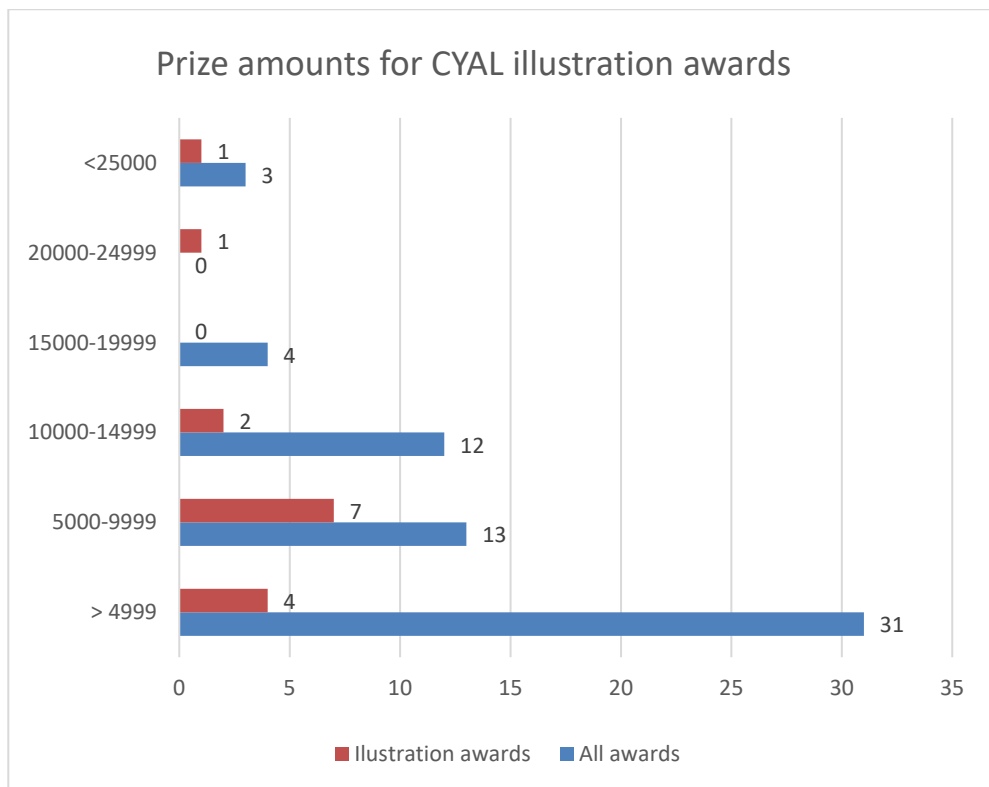


Fig. 6 Prize amounts for CYAL illustration awards  
Source: Compiled by the authors

#### 4. Conclusions

The CYAL awards landscape in Spain shows the importance that the CYAL subsector of publishing has been acquiring since the 1980s. Illustration is not an exception to this. The data obtained in the study confirm that Spanish publishers are increasingly opting for illustrated books and albums that they themselves produce for a market that, until a few years ago, was basically catered to by foreign production. It can be stated that the awards are helping to promote authors and works that sometimes come to occupy prominent spaces within editorial production and that attract the attention of specialist readers and critics, thereby heightening the profession’s standing. However, these prizes are still small in number compared to those granted to other types of works.

Consolidation of illustration awards has been going on for years. They were mainly created from the beginning of the twenty-first century; they are institutional in nature; they are awarded to original works; they offer small financial sums that may be advances on publishing royalties. Prizes awarded to prose fiction predominate, and all kinds of thematic categories are represented, although titles

about real life and fantasy and stories featuring animals are most common. The trend of adapting CYAL classics continues.

In Spain, there is an important set of illustrators who are being recognized through this type of award. However, few of these figures work exclusively in children's illustration, and few receive a high number of awards. And as Morán (2004) states, although our illustrators are capable of producing great work, they do not have very many opportunities, and their most promising avenue is still to win a contest.

The growth in awards given to illustrated albums is noteworthy; illustrators have found great creative scope in this area, a cause and consequence of the abundant publishing of this type of work in recent years.

“Since its quantitative take-off in the early 1980s, we have not experienced anything even remotely like it. Those who have always been committed to publications of this type and made albums their emblem have stayed on the scene and have increased the number of titles published. Those who had decided that albums are not profitable are also there, publishing titles in greater or lesser quantities. Other publishers that had never opted for albums have opened lines to publish this type of book” (Morán, 2004:7).

Within this increase in publishing, an evident trend has been observed in recent years: the elimination of the age barrier. Accordingly, “The album is no longer for children only. Rather, it is a narrative form in itself that, along with comics and graphic novels, is attractive to all types of audiences” (Cutliff, 2010:55).

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- <sup>i</sup> This paper is part of the research project “The Nonacademic Literary Canon: Construction, Characteristics, Decision Makers, Selection and Reception in the Context of Virtual Public Epitexts” PID2019-10587RB-I00. Research, development and innovation projects within the State Programmes on generation of knowledge and scientific and technological consolidation of the research, development and innovation system oriented towards societal challenges. Spanish Ministry of the Economy and Innovation. 2019 Call.
- <sup>ii</sup> Great Britain is considered to be the birthplace of illustrated books, which emerged from the seventeenth century, their production led by Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway.
- <sup>iii</sup> Until 2006 the name was the Lazarillo Illustration Prize (Lazarillo Ilustración).
- <sup>iv</sup> Data obtained from the research carried out within the research project “The he Nonacademic Literary Canon: Construction, Characteristics, Decision Makers, Selection and Reception in the Context of Virtual Public Epitexts” PID2019-10587RB-I00. Data pending publication.