77th US National Book Awards: 'Paradiso 17' wins; medal for Rushdie

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News

The 77th National Book Awards, run by the US National Book Foundation, were presented on 18 November 2026 at Cipriani Wall Street, New York. Hannah Lillith Assadi won the fiction award for her novel 'Paradiso 17' (Knopf), which AP described as an account of a Palestinian exile's worldwide journey. She said her father's death was partly the inspiration. Other winners: nonfiction – Abdelrahman ElGendy's 'Huna'; poetry – Brenda Hillman's 'Still House in the Desert'; translated literature – Vicente Luis Mora's 'Centroeuropa' (translated from Spanish by Rahul Bery); young people's literature – David Levithan and Gabriel Duckels' 'The Fight of Our Lives'. Each of the five category winners received $10,000. India-born author Salman Rushdie received the lifetime 'Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters'. Paediatrician-author Perri Klass received the Literarian Award.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Award	77th US National Book Awards (since 1950)
Presented by	National Book Foundation
Date, venue	18 Nov 2026; Cipriani Wall Street, New York
Fiction	Hannah Lillith Assadi – 'Paradiso 17'

Point	Details
Nonfiction	Abdelrahman ElGendy – 'Huna'
Poetry	Brenda Hillman – 'Still House in the Desert'
Translated lit.	'Centroeuropa' – Vicente Luis Mora; tr. Rahul Bery
Honorary medal	Salman Rushdie – Distinguished Contribution to American Letters
Prize money	$10,000 per category winner

Background

- The US National Book Awards began in 1950; since 1989 they have been run by the non-profit National Book Foundation. The Pulitzer Prizes (since 1917), America's other top literary honour, are administered by Columbia University, New York, under Joseph Pulitzer's will.
- Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay (Mumbai) in 1947. His 'Midnight's Children' won the 1981 Booker Prize, and was later chosen the 'Booker of Bookers' (25th anniversary, 1993) and the 'Best of the Booker' (40th anniversary, 2008). He lost sight in one eye in a 2022 knife attack in New York.
- India's Sahitya Akademi (1954) gives annual awards in 24 languages; its first Tamil award (1955) went to R.P. Sethu Pillai's essay collection 'Tamil Inbam'. Kalki (1956, 'Alai Osai'), Rajaji (1958, 'Chakravarti Thirumagan') and Mu. Varadarajan (1961, 'Agal Vilakku') followed. India's highest literary award is the Jnanpith (since 1965).
- Indian-origin writer Jhumpa Lahiri won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her short-story collection 'Interpreter of Maladies'.

Tamil Nadu link: Akilan was the first Tamil writer to win the Jnanpith ('Chithirappavai', 1975). Jayakanthan (2002) was the second and poet Vairamuthu (2025 – 60th – Jnanpith, announced March 2026) the third (DT Next, Deccan Herald). The Chennai Book Fair is among India's biggest book festivals.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Award: 77th US National Book Awards (since 1950); Presented by: National Book Foundation; Date, venue: 18 Nov 2026; Cipriani Wall Street, New York; Fiction: Hannah Lillith Assadi – 'Paradiso 17'.

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Practice questions (with answers)

1. Who received the first Sahitya Akademi Award for Tamil (1955), for 'Tamil Inbam'?

A) Kalki

B) R.P. Sethu Pillai

C) Mu. Varadarajan

D) Rajaji

Answer: B – Explanation: R.P. Sethu Pillai – an essay collection. Kalki won in 1956 ('Alai Osai'), Rajaji in 1958 and Mu. Va. in 1961.

2. Which US university administers the Pulitzer Prizes, awarded since 1917?

A) Harvard

B) Columbia

C) Yale

D) Princeton

Answer: B – Explanation: Columbia University, New York – under Joseph Pulitzer's will, which also funded its journalism school.

3. Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children', the 1981 Booker winner, received which special honour in 1993?

A) 'Booker of Bookers'

B) Pulitzer Prize

C) Sahitya Akademi Award

D) Prix Goncourt

Answer: A – Explanation: 'Booker of Bookers' on the prize's 25th anniversary; in 2008 it was also voted the 'Best of the Booker'.

4. Who was the first Tamil writer to receive the Jnanpith Award?

A) Jayakanthan

B) Vairamuthu

C) Akilan

D) Kalki

Answer: C – Explanation: Akilan – 'Chithirappavai' (1975). Jayakanthan won in 2002 and Vairamuthu the 2025 award.

5. Which Indian-origin author won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for 'Interpreter of Maladies'?

A) Vikram Seth

B) Amitav Ghosh

C) Kiran Desai

D) Jhumpa Lahiri

Answer: D – Explanation: Jhumpa Lahiri – her debut short-story collection. Kiran Desai won the 2006 Booker.

Sources: AP via AJC; Lit Hub; The Booker Prizes; Pulitzer Prizes; National Book Foundation; Sahitya Akademi award list – sahitya-akademi.gov.in; The Tribune/PTI (Vairamuthu, 60th Jnanpith, 2025); DT Next; Deccan Herald. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.