



Winner of the 2026 Libris Literature Prize

11 May 2026 – Bert Natter's *At the End of the War* has won the 2026 Libris Literature Prize and the accompanying prize money of 50,000 euros. The jury, chaired by Noraly Beyer, journalist and presenter, selected the winner of the 2026 Libris Literature Prize from six nominees for the best original Dutch-language novel of the past year. The award ceremony was broadcast live on *Nieuwsuur*.

'In this novel, Bert Natter demonstrates in an unparalleled way that not all the stories of the Second World War have yet been told.'

The alphabetical longlist for the 2026 Libris Literature Prize contained 191 novels. From that extensive list of novels published in 2025, the jury first selected eighteen novels for the longlist, then six novels for the shortlist, and finally the one novel that is being awarded today. That search for what the jury considered to be the best Dutch-language novel of the previous year led to fascinating discussions and took place during various lengthy sessions in a spirit of utmost harmony.

The novels by the six nominated authors each demonstrate in their own unique way that Dutch-language literature is very much alive, as they articulate classic themes in an ingenious and striking manner, using words and sentences many of which linger in the mind for a long time.

In the end, the jury selected as the winner of the 2026 Libris Literature Prize a novel that, in an unparalleled, moving yet also confrontational manner, retells a history—our history—that must never be forgotten. The book demonstrates the author's daring and literary ingenuity; despite the subject matter being almost impossible to put into words, he has produced a novel that cannot be put down, and whose polyphonic characters offer a panoramic view of both the microcosm evoked in the novel and the

macrocosm of human life across all times and places.

'She wants to accept the bouquet, but as soon as the stems touch her skin and she inhales the scent, she lets the flowers fall from her hands.'

This is the final sentence of this overwhelming novel, winner of the 2026 Libris Literature Prize: *At the End of the War* by Bert Natter.

Laudatio

At the End of the War is a true tour de force by Bert Natter. How much courage does it take to compose such an intense novel centered on the events in a concentration camp? Hadn't we read enough about that already? With *At the End of the War*, Bert Natter shows that the answer to that is a resounding 'no': he succeeds in writing a completely original, idiosyncratic and magnificent new book on this heavy subject.

The novel is set over a single day, 20 April 1945 – not coincidentally Adolf Hitler's 56th birthday – and follows no fewer than 31 characters. The eleven-year-old son of the deputy camp commander Karl Zehlendorf has disappeared. As a reader, you soon realize what has happened: the question is rather whether the parents will discover the merciless truth. And even when that question is answered, the novel loses none of its tension, and you, as a reader, remain glued to the pages.

The panoramic view, told from multiple perspectives, gives the novel a strikingly cinematic (and therefore filmable!) quality. Moreover, these choices of perspective bear witness to great literary craftsmanship. Natter brings the multitude of perspectives under control by giving each character their own distinct characterization. You distinguish the characters intuitively, rather than on the basis of their names. It is a testament to great literary skill to make this chorus of voices flow so naturally. Equally impressive are the vivid vignettes Natter sketches. He zooms in on the small details of everyday life in and around the camp, whilst outside, tragedy unfolds irrevocably.

At the End of the War reveals the far-reaching consequences of prolonged indoctrination; after all, these mostly young people have grown up on Nazi propaganda. At the same time, Natter skillfully manages to portray the

brutal camp commander—whose dream of becoming a pianist has been dashed—not only as a thoroughly vicious man, but also as a laughable figure. With all this, Natter repeatedly places the reader in a complex position: do you really want to laugh? Do you really want to empathize with characters responsible for atrocities? Do you really want to enjoy reading this novel?

In an unparalleled manner, Natter demonstrates with this richly varied novel that not all the stories from the Second World War have yet been told. That perhaps the time is only now ripe for a new kind of vivid, shifting and, in that sense, almost documentary-style account of atrocities which, although historical, unfortunately do not belong to the past. With this novel, Natter invites us to take a fresh look at a historical period we thought we already knew, but which we now see with new eyes. And that is a magnificent literary achievement, which we are delighted to honour with the Libris Literature Prize 2026.

Jury of the Libris Literature Prize 2026, Amsterdam, 11th of May 2026