



Sofie-stiftelsen
THE SOPHIE FOUNDATION

B.A.U.M. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD 2004

JOSTEIN GAARDER

AUTHOR



Jostein Gaarder was born in Oslo, Norway in 1952. His parents' occupations presaged his own interests in teaching and writing -- his father was a headmaster and his mother a teacher and author of children's books. Gaarder attended the Oslo Katerdralskole and the University of Oslo, where he studied Scandinavian languages, Religion sciences and philosophy. Following his 1974 marriage, Gaarder began to write, contributing to several textbooks on philosophy and theology. His family moved to Bergen in 1981, where he began to teach high school philosophy, a post he held for several years.

His first fiction book, *Diagnosen og andre noveller* (*The Diagnosis and Other Stories*) was published in 1986. Two books for children followed, *Barna fra Sukhavati* (*The Children from Sukhavati*, 1987) and *Froskeslottet* (*The Frog Castle*, 1988) before the publication of *Kabalmysteriet* (*The Solitaire Mystery*) in 1990. *Kabalmysteriet* won both the Norwegian Literary Critics' Award and the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs Literary Prize.

Sofies verden (*Sophie's World*) followed in 1991 and was a gigantic success. For three years running it was Norway's number one best-seller, and it repeated this success in nearly every country in which it appeared. On the best seller list of the German Magazine "Spiegel", "Sophies World" entered the first rank in 1994 and became the first book for young people that has been listed on a best seller list in Germany. In 1994 he received the German award for literature for young people. To date, the book has been published in more than 50 languages and was the best-selling fiction book in the world in 1995, an astonishing achievement for what is essentially a textbook in the form of a novel.

In the nineties Gaarder also published four other highly acclaimed books. „*Through a Glass, Darkly*“ for instant was awarded with the „Golden Cabel“ in 1996, the Austrian prize for young people's books. It was also declared book of the month by the „German Academy for children's books“ in September 1996 and won the literature award for young people's books called "Buxtehuder Bulle" in 1997.

In his books Jostein Gaarder describes two different worlds. There is a real world, with everyday situations and then there is a fantasy world. Jostein Gaarder himself also lives in two worlds. One of them is his family life in his house in Oslo, where he loves conversations with others. On the other hand he likes to be for himself in the nature. There he thinks about philosophy and fundamental questions like "Where am I from?" and "Who am I?".

Nature is his refuge. A place to retreat, where he can recover from writing. It is a place, where the problems of mankind come to his mind, like lack of water, deforestation, the greenhouse effect, the hole in the ozone layer and radioactive waste. Gaarder is sure that with our current economic system we will collide with nature.

The success of *Sophie's World* allowed Gaarder to become a full-time writer. It also allowed him to become a philanthropist. In 1997 Gaarder and wife Siri Dannevig formed the Sophie Foundation to promote a sustainable environment. The foundation annually awards the Sophie Prize, worth \$100,000 US to "an individual or an organization that in a pioneering or a particularly creative way, has pointed to alternatives to the present development and/or put such alternatives into practice."

Jostein Gaarder expresses his attitude towards nature not by numbers and facts. Instead he describes feelings and thoughts. The Sophie Foundation logo reflects this. „For me Sophie watches all kinds of the different worlds, when she observes the universe through her telescope. She looks at our earth, the sun, the stars, the galaxies. Perhaps humans are the only living creatures in the whole universe, with a universal consciousness. Therefore we have not only a global but also a cosmic responsibility to protect the earth from its destruction“.