

Harmony Tree International Speech Festival (HTISF)
2025-2026 Set Pieces for Asia Division

FINAL

Prose Reading
Born in 2010-2011

Howl's Moving Castle
by Diana Wynne Jones, an adapted version.

At every archway, a splendidly dressed person with white gloves - still somehow white in spite of the heat - inquired their business and then led them on to the next personage in the next archway.

“Mrs Pendragon to see the King!” the voice of each echoed down the halls.

About halfway, Howl was politely detached and told to wait.

Michael and Sophie went on being handed from person to person.

They were taken upstairs, after which the splendid persons were dressed in blue instead of red, and handed on again until they came to an anteroom panelled in a hundred different-coloured woods.

There Michael was peeled off and made to wait too.

Sophie, who by this time was not at all sure whether she was not having some strange dream, was ushered through huge double doors, and this time the echoing voice said,

“Your Majesty, here is Mrs Pendragon to see you.”

And there was the King, not on a throne, but sitting in a rather square chair with only a little gold leaf on it, near the middle of a large room, and dressed much more modestly than the persons who waited on him.

He was quite alone, like an ordinary person.

He sat with one leg thrust out in a kingly manner, and he was handsome in a plump, slightly vague way, but to Sophie he seemed quite youthful and just a touch too proud of being a king.

She felt he ought, with that face, to have been more unsure of himself.

He said “Well, what does Wizard Howl's mother want to see me about?”

And Sophie was suddenly overwhelmed by the fact that she was standing talking to the King.