

Speaker's manuscript, slide show

The 2017 Nobel Peace Prize

Title slide

Now the world has found out who will receive the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize.

Today you will learn more about the background of the Nobel Prize and about this year's Prize.

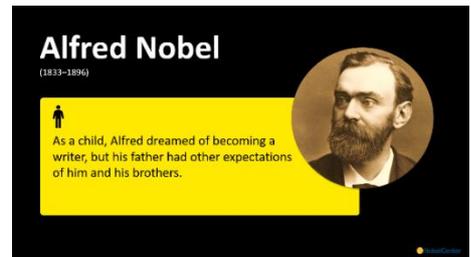


Alfred Nobel

Alfred Nobel was born in Stockholm, Sweden on October 23, 1833.

As a nine-year-old, he moved together with his older brothers and his mother to Saint Petersburg, the capital of Russia at that time. There his father Immanuel had started a factory.

In St. Petersburg, Alfred received a good education and dreamed of becoming a writer. Alfred's father made him study natural sciences and technology instead, since he and his brothers were expected to take over the family's factory.



Dynamite

Alfred Nobel, his father and his brother Emil tried to invent an explosive that was safer than pure nitroglycerine. It was very dangerous to use nitroglycerine as an explosive – so dangerous that Alfred's brother Emil died in an explosives accident in 1864.

But Alfred finally succeeded in developing a method for producing nitroglycerine and a way to use it as an explosive.

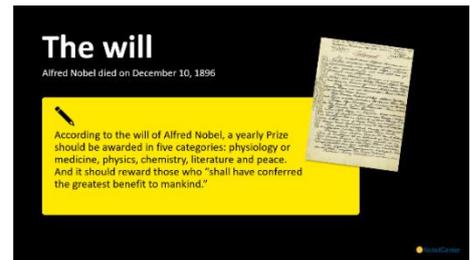
He named his invention "Dynamite" in 1867. Dynamite was a comparatively safe explosive. It was in huge demand during the period of industrialisation, since there was so much construction work. By taking out patents on many of his ideas, Alfred earned a lot of money and started many factories around the world.



The will

Alfred Nobel died of a stroke on December 10, 1896. He had no children, so in his will he wrote that a large part of his fortune should be placed in a fund. The yearly interest on this fund would pay for a prize given to “those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to mankind.”

The interest would be divided into five equal parts, with one part awarded to “the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses”. The first Nobel Prize was awarded in 1901. Since then, more than 900 Prizes have been awarded to different people and organisations.



The Nobel Prize Award Ceremony

On December 10 each year, the Nobel Prize is presented. This year the Prize in each category consists of a medal, a diploma and nine million Swedish kronor – or over a million US dollars.

The Prize Award Ceremony is held at Stockholm Concert Hall for all categories except the Peace Prize, which is awarded in Oslo, Norway. After the actual Award Ceremony, there is an elegant Banquet in each city to honour the new Nobel Laureates.



The Nobel Peace Prize

“...to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses”.

In 1901 the first Peace Prize was awarded to Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross. Right from the start, the Norwegian Nobel Committee thus adopted a broad interpretation of the peace concept; humanitarian work is also a way of promoting peace.

Important categories that have been rewarded are disarmament, mediation and work aimed at a better organised world. In recent decades, efforts to promote democracy, human rights and environmental work have also been rewarded.



Examples of earlier Laureates

Earlier Peace Prize Laureates in these categories include Liu Xiaobo (2010) for his work on behalf of human rights and Malala Yousafzai (2014) for her struggle for the rights of children and young people – especially the right of girls to education.

Liu Xiaobo was arrested in December 2008 and was sentenced a year later to eleven years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power”. He was thus unable to accept the Peace Prize in person. Liu consistently denied the charges. “Opposition is not equivalent to subversion,” he pointed out. Liu Xiaobo died in the summer of 2017, aged 61.



The 2017 Nobel Peace Prize

This year's Peace Prize has been awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) "for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons".



An international coalition

ICAN is an international coalition of non-governmental organisations. At present, the coalition consists of 468 organisations in 101 countries. Some organisations are small and local; others are large and international. Thirteen Swedish organisations belong to the coalition.

ICAN originated in Australia and officially launched its campaign in 2007. The goal of the campaign is a worldwide ban on nuclear weapons. ICAN's head office is located in Geneva, Switzerland and its Executive Director is Beatrice Fihn, who comes from Sweden.



What are nuclear weapons?

There are two main types of nuclear weapons: atom bombs and hydrogen bombs. Both of these derive their power from nuclear reactions that occur inside the bomb.

The first main type is atom bombs. They are also called fission bombs, since their energy comes from fission, or splitting heavy atomic nuclei such as uranium. This is because when the nuclei of atoms are split, large quantities of energy are released. In an atom bomb, a chain reaction occurs: when an atomic nucleus is split, this releases nuclear particles which in turn split new atomic nuclei, and so on. Atom bombs have been used twice in war, in 1945 when the United States dropped bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The second type of nuclear weapons is hydrogen bombs. They are also called thermonuclear bombs. Hydrogen bombs are mainly based on energy that is released by fusion, or bringing together light atomic nuclei into a heavier atomic nucleus – more specifically, turning hydrogen nuclei into helium nuclei. Today most nuclear weapons are hydrogen bombs that are based on different combinations of fission and fusion.



Nuclear-armed states

There are five official nuclear-armed states: The United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China. These were the countries that had nuclear weapons when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) went into effect in 1970. They were thus recognised as nuclear-armed states. According to the NPT, they are not allowed to spread nuclear weapons to other countries.

Since 1970 several other countries have obtained nuclear weapons: India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. These countries stand outside the non-proliferation treaty.

Today there are about 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world. More than 90% of them belong to the United States and Russia.



A historic treaty

ICAN works to achieve a world that is free of nuclear weapons. The coalition was also a driving force behind the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that was negotiated by the United Nations in the spring of 2017. Among other things, the treaty bans the development, manufacture, possession and use of nuclear weapons. So far, 53 countries have signed the treaty and three countries have ratified it. When 50 countries have ratified the treaty, it goes into effect and will be legally binding on the countries that are party to the treaty.

None of the nine nuclear-armed states have signed the treaty. ICAN is now focusing its work on persuading more countries to sign and ratify the treaty.



A 10-year struggle

According to the Norwegian Nobel Committee, which selects the Peace Prize Laureates, there is great danger because today some countries are modernising their nuclear arsenals. There is also a risk that other countries will try to develop their own nuclear arsenals. Nuclear weapons are a threat to humanity. This is why international treaties banning nuclear weapons are needed, in the same way as there are treaties that prohibit land mines and chemical weapons.

ICAN is receiving the Peace Prize ten years after launching its campaign, because it has given new vitality to the struggle for a world without nuclear weapons.

The Prize is being awarded on the basis of Alfred Nobel's will, which specifies that among other things, the Peace Prize should go to those who have worked for "...the abolition or reduction of standing armies".

