*La rentrée littéraire*: what does it mean?

In 1903, the Frères Goncourt created the *Académie Goncourt*. They were lovers of literature but not some much of the literary establishment concentrated at that time in the hands of the *Académie française*. The *Académie Goncourt* was their attempt at spreading the influence. The first *Prix Goncourt* was to be awarded to a novel (a genre despised by the *Académie française*) and written by a first-time author. The following year, twenty-two women got together and created the *Prix Fémina* to denounce the sexism of the *Prix Goncourt*. The *Académie française* lashed back with the *Grand Prix de la littérature*. In the following years, several important prizes were created: *Prix Renaudot* (by journalists who disagreed with the Goncourt choice), the *Prix interallié* for journalists-writers. The multiplication of these prizes at the beginning of the 20th century reflects the expansion of the book business linked to the fact that school became compulsory in 1882, and more and more people can read and enjoy it.

Today, more prizes have joined the ranks of these early ones, particularly prizes celebrating francophone literature beyond metropolitan borders. Very recently, there is also an attempt to listen to the voices of unknown readers, most of whom have literary blogs or Tik-Tok accounts where they recommend books they enjoy. In short, we see a shift from prizes honoring a certain way of doing things or representing a certain literary tradition, to prizes that include reading as pleasure for people who may not be interested in recognizing literary techniques or currents.

The prizes in general are very important in the French social landscape and sponsored heavily by booksellers because books remain a favorite Christmas present for many: whether literature lovers or not, many readers appreciate receiving a known prize as a present. Booksellers capitalize on this and participate in the *rentrée littéraire* effect.