

# Renate Ahrens

## Biography

Born in Herford, Germany, in 1955, she studied English and French literature at the universities of Marburg, Lille, and Hamburg. She worked as a teacher for a few years, before she and her husband moved to Dublin in 1986. Since then she has been a freelance writer. She initially wrote for German children's radio, scripts for children's television, and numerous children's books, including German-English ones. For adult audiences, she wrote the radio play *Back to Berlin*, which was broadcast by Irish radio (RTÉ) in 1991, as well as several stage plays, including *When the Wall Came Down*, which premiered in Dublin in 1998 and was staged in Berlin and Nuremberg. Since 2001, her main focus has shifted to writing novels. *Fremde Schwestern*, published in 2011, made her known to a wider audience. Her new novel, *Das verschwiegene Land*, will be released in autumn 2025. Renate Ahrens' books have been translated into several languages (a complete list of her publications can be found at [www.renate-ahrens.de](http://www.renate-ahrens.de)).

She has undertaken reading tours in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Ireland, and the USA. In 1996-97 she lived in Cape Town, and in 2002-03 in Rome. In 2019, she and her husband left Dublin and moved back to Hamburg.

She is a member of the Literaturzentrum Hamburg and the PEN Center of German-Speaking Writers Abroad.

## Note on her novels

In her thoroughly researched books, she explores how history intertwines with the fate of individuals. In her novel *Das gerettete Kind*, the protagonist is deeply affected by the loss of family, language, and identity—traumas that are passed on to the next generation. *Alles, was folgte* tells of a young love destroyed by war, of two sisters separated by the Berlin Wall, and of a father who was presumed missing in 1945. In her novel *Schicksalsfreundin*, the protagonist learns that her life has been built on a lie. Her investigation leads her into the darkest chapter of German-Polish history. *Das verschwiegene Land* deals with the transgenerational trauma of a woman whose mother cut the ties with her homeland, France, after World War II. Since then, everything French has been taboo in the family.

## Awards and honours

2017 The novel *Alles, was folgte* is named NDR Book of the month for June.  
2013 Geertje-Potash-Suhr-Preis for the short story *In drei Monaten achtzehn*  
2001 The children's novel *Afspraak op de kattentrap* (*Katzenleiter Nr. 3*) is awarded first prize in the category of books for ten- to twelve-year-olds by the Limburg Children's Jury (Belgium).  
2000 Förderpreis des Club Bertelsmann for the novel *Der Wintergarten*  
1999 Goldener Telix for the broadcast series *Tobi und die Stadtparkkids*

1994 Christophorus-Autoren-Team-Preis (with John Delbridge) for *Kinder im Straßenverkehr* (broadcast as part of the Sesame Street television series)  
1989 Kulturpreis des Kreises Herford (poetry)