

****STRICTLY UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 12.00PM TUESDAY 7 JUNE 2011****

FROM PAGE TO STAGE AS SEVENTH CHILDREN'S LAUREATE IS REVEALED

www.childrenslaureate.org.uk

Booktrust and Waterstone's are delighted to announce that **Julia Donaldson**, author of the multi-million selling children's book *The Gruffalo*, is the new Waterstone's Children's Laureate. The announcement took place at a daytime ceremony at King's Place, in central London today (Tuesday 7 June 2011) and will see Donaldson taking over from outgoing Children's Laureate, Anthony Browne.

The role of Children's Laureate is awarded once every two years to an eminent writer or illustrator of children's books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field. Donaldson, the first Scottish based author to receive the Laureateship, said: 'It is a great honour to have been chosen as the new Waterstone's Children's Laureate. Over the next two years I hope to find every opportunity to be a spokesperson and advocate for children's books and reading.'

Julia Donaldson is the author of over 120 books and plays for children and teenagers, including *The Gruffalo* (the animation of which was nominated for an Oscar and a BAFTA), *Room on the Broom*, *Stick Man*, *Cave Baby*, *Freddie and the Fairy* and *What the Ladybird Heard* – some of which are among the UK's best-selling picture books – and the award-winning teenage novel *Running on the Cracks*. In 2010, Donaldson was the most borrowed children's author from UK libraries.

During her two year tenure Julia will bring her passion for the spoken word, rhyme, song and drama to the fore, by making children's literature in performance a key focus of her laureateship:

'With my background in plays and song-writing, I am particularly keen to develop projects which link books with drama and music, and to explore the ways performance can help children enjoy reading and grow in confidence.'

Donaldson will also join previous Children's Laureates in using her appointment as a platform to champion literature campaigns that are close to her heart:

'As someone with minor hearing difficulties myself, I am very interested in promoting signed stories for deaf children, and of course I want to add my voice as Children's Laureate to the libraries campaign. So drama, music, stories for deaf children, libraries, plus building on the great work of my six predecessors as laureate: these will be my "big things", and they are all linked to the "biggest thing of all" – the pleasure and richness to be gained from reading.'

The post was established in 1999 to celebrate exceptional children's authors and illustrators and to acknowledge their importance in creating the readers of tomorrow. Previous Laureates include Quentin Blake (1999-2001), Anne Fine (2001-2003), Michael Morpurgo (2003-2005), Jacqueline Wilson (2005-2007) and Michael Rosen (2007-2009) and Anthony Browne (2009-2011).

Julia Donaldson was presented with the Children's Laureate medal and a £15,000 bursary cheque by **Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE, Chair of the Children's Laureate 2011-2013 selection committee, who comments:**

'I have known Julia Donaldson for many years, since my time in *Playschool* and she has always had a passion to excite, educate and entertain children through her writing which fires up their imagination in a most delightful way. Childhood lasts a lifetime and every drop of creativity they are exposed to at an early age will stay with them forever. I have every confidence that in her new role as Waterstone's Children's Laureate she will be a wonderful ambassador in promoting the importance and value of children's literature.'

Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE was joined on the 2011-2013 selection committee by Sarah Clarke – Children's Buying Manager, Waterstone's; Lucy Mangan – author and journalist for the *Guardian*; Abigail Campbell – freelance children's literature consultant, representing the Children's Laureate committee; Clive Barnes – retired librarian, representing International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) UK; Vanessa Lewis – children's bookseller, The Book Nook; Dr Mel Gibson – Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University.

Waterstone's is the main sponsor of the Children's Laureate post, with other sponsorship and funding coming from children's publishers, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council



(MLA) and Arts Council England (ACE). Independent literature charity Booktrust continues to manage the award.

Toby Bourne, Waterstone's Head of Books comments:

'We could not be more delighted about Julia's appointment. We love working with her, we love her books, her imagination and the pure joy her words bring to the children that visit our stores. She will be an amazing Laureate.'

Viv Bird, Chief Executive of Booktrust comments:

'Each Children's Laureate brings their own distinctive talent and passion to the post. The outgoing Laureate Anthony Browne encouraged children to look closer at picture books and explore their own creativity through playing the Shape Game. Anyone who has read Julia Donaldson's books or seen her perform will know that she has a special gift for making words dance off the pages and making literature come alive, for children and adults alike. I am delighted to hear of Julia's appointment as the next Waterstone's Children's Laureate 2011-2013 and Booktrust looks forward to working with her over the next two years.'

ENDS

For further information, images and interview requests please contact Alice Ingall at Booktrust on 020 8875 4827 / 07870 636099 / alice.ingall@booktrust.org.uk or Anwen Hooson at Riot Communications on 07899 798885 / anwen@riotcommunications.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

Julia Donaldson

Julia Donaldson was born in 1948. She grew up in London and studied Drama and French at Bristol University. She worked for a few years in publishing and as a teacher, while also writing and performing songs and street theatre with her husband Malcolm, and writing and directing two musicals for children. She then combined a career writing songs for children's television with bringing up a family.

In 1993, one of her songs was made into a book, *A Squash and a Squeeze*. Since then she has written over a 100 books and plays for children and teenagers, including the award-winning rhyming stories *The Gruffalo*, *Room on the Broom*, *The Snail and the Whale*, *Stick Man* and *Zog* all illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

Julia has also worked with different illustrators, among them Lydia Monks, Nick Sharratt and David Roberts, and has written several young fiction titles, including three books in the *Princess Mirror-Belle* series. Her novel for teenagers, *Running on the Cracks*, was published in 2009 and won the Nasen Inclusive Children's Book Award. She is also the author of many educational books, including the 60 books which comprise the phonic reading scheme 'Songbirds', published by Oxford University Press. Julia is also published by Macmillan Children's Books, Scholastic, Egmont and Puffin.

For three years Julia was writer in residence in Easterhouse, a suburb of Glasgow, helping local children write and act. She is now patron of the charity Artlink Central which engages artists to work in hospitals, prisons and schools (www.artlinkcentral.org).

She lives in Bearsden, Glasgow, with her husband Malcolm. More information can be found on her website: www.juliadonaldson.co.uk.

Children's Laureate

The idea for the Children's Laureate originated from a conversation between (the then) Poet Laureate Ted Hughes and children's writer Michael Morpurgo. The role of Children's Laureate, which has a bursary of £15,000, is awarded once every two years to an eminent writer or illustrator of children's books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field. The appointment of a Children's Laureate acknowledges the importance of exceptional children's authors in creating the readers of tomorrow.

The role of Children's Laureate covers the whole of the UK. For more information please visit www.childrenslaureate.org.uk

Children's Laureate selection

The selection committee consider nominations for the Children's Laureate from a range of organisations representing librarians, critics, writers, literature development workers, including the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and booksellers. They also consider authors and illustrators nominated by children who vote online through the Children's Laureate website.

Children's Laureate Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is made up of representatives of the children's book world who provide a range of expertise and guidance with which to support the Children's Laureate's work. The current Children's Laureate Steering Committee comprises: John Dunne, Chair, retired librarian and representative of IBBY; Abigail Campbell, freelance consultant; Julia Eccleshare, Director of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) and Children's Books Editor the *Guardian*; Lindsey Fraser, literary agent; Nikki Marsh, Head of Literature Promotions and Partnerships at Booktrust; Alyx Price, Consumer, Marketing and Communications Director at Scholastic UK, representing the Publishers Association Children's Group; Professor Kim Reynolds, University of Newcastle.

Waterstone's

The Children's Laureateship is sponsored by Waterstone's, the UK's leading specialist bookseller with nearly 300 branches in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as branches in Eire, in Amsterdam and Brussels, on the Isle of Man and Jersey. Its transactional website Waterstones.com was launched in 2006, and there are currently over 3 million holders of the Waterstone's Card. Waterstone's and Julia Donaldson worked together for Picture This in 2009, a competition to find an unpublished illustrator to work on her story, *Freddie and the Fairy*. The resulting book, by Julia Donaldson and Karen George, was a Christmas bestseller in 2010. Waterstone's was named Children's Bookseller of the Year at the Bookseller Industry Awards 2011. www.waterstones.com/laureate

Booktrust

The Children's Laureateship is administered by Booktrust, an independent national literature charity dedicated to encouraging people of all ages to engage with books. Booktrust is responsible for a number of successful national reading promotions, sponsored book prizes and creative reading projects aimed at encouraging readers to discover and enjoy books. These include the Orange Prize for Fiction, Children's Book Week, the Roald Dahl Funny Prize and Bookstart, the national programme that works through locally based organisations to give a free pack of books to young children, with guidance materials for parents and carers. www.booktrust.org.uk