

**\*\*Strictly embargoed until 00.01 GMT, Thursday 14 January 2010\*\***

## SHORTLIST FOR MAJOR CHILDREN'S BOOK PRIZE REVEALED

A mother drawing on her own experiences of raising a disabled child has been shortlisted for this year's Waterstone's Children's Book Prize, one of the most valuable and prestigious children's book awards in the country.

Laura Summers, a BAFTA-nominated writer of many popular children's television series including *The Story of Tracy Beaker* and *The New Worst Witch*, wrote her debut novel *Desperate Measures* after realising that very few children's books have protagonists with learning disabilities. A tale of young siblings trying to stay together after their foster parents break-up, *Desperate Measures* alternates between two narrators: Rhianna, brain-damaged at birth, and her twin sister Vicky. Waterstone's described the debut novel as "affecting, honest, and totally gripping".

Real-life issues play a significant part in this year's shortlist, with several authors tackling tough subjects for children: Lucy Christopher's poignant novel *Flyaway* tells the story of a young girl who doesn't want to think about the fact that her father may be dying, whilst in Suzanne LaFleur's *Love, Aubrey* the title character struggles to cope by herself when something terrible happens and she's left on her own.

Celebrating its sixth year, the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize was created to champion new and emerging talent in children's writing. This 2010 shortlist ranges from stories about dead hamsters and medieval monks, to tales of sorcerers and a girl who can fly. The latter (*The Girl Who Could Fly* by Victoria Forester) has already received an endorsement from publishing phenomenon Stephenie Meyer, who said: "It's the oddest/sweetest mix of *Little House on the Prairie* and *X-Men*. I was smiling the whole time (except for the part where I cried). Prepare to have your heart warmed".

The nine shortlisted authors competing for the coveted award are as follows:

1. *Flyaway* by Lucy Christopher (Chicken House)
2. *The Great Hamster Massacre* by Katie Davies (Simon & Schuster)
3. *The Girl Who Could Fly* by Victoria Forester (Macmillan)
4. *Seven Sorcerers* by Caro King (Quercus)
5. *Love, Aubrey* by Suzanne LaFleur (Puffin)
6. *The Toymaker* by Jeremy de Quidt (David Fickling Books)
7. *Desperate Measures* by Laura Summers (Piccadilly Press)
8. *Superhuman: Meteorite Strike* by A.G Taylor (Usborne)
9. *The Crowfield Curse* by Pat Walsh (Chicken House)

"2009 was a bumper year for children's books and 2010 is off to an equally strong start with such a spectacular shortlist," said Sarah Clarke, Children's Buying Manager at Waterstone's. "Horror and the supernatural often dominate children's fiction but this year we're seeing that balanced with serious, believable stories proving that sometimes real-life drama hits closest to home".

Final judging is currently underway, and the winner will be announced at an evening reception at Waterstone's Piccadilly (London), Europe's largest bookstore, on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February. As well as a £5000 cash prize - one of the most valuable for children's writing in the UK - the winning author will see a significant boost in sales, and the promise of ongoing commitment to their writing career from Waterstone's 315 branches nationwide.

**For further press information, author and jacket images, and interview requests please contact  
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## NOTES TO EDITORS

The Waterstone's Children's Book Prize is open to authors writing for 7-13 year-olds who have written two fiction titles or less, and is unique in that it is voted for by booksellers across the country.

Previous winners of the prize include *The Diamond of Drury Lane* by Julia Golding, which also went on to win the Nestle Smarties Book Prize, Sally Nicholls' highly acclaimed story of a terminally ill 11-year-old, *Ways to Live Forever*, and last year's winner *Thirteen Treasures* by Michelle Harrison.

Waterstone's is the UK's leading specialist bookseller with 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 was named High Street Retailer of the Year at the Bookseller Retail Awards 2009.

[www.waterstones.com/wcbp](http://www.waterstones.com/wcbp)

*Shortlist details and bookseller comments:*

### **FLYAWAY BY LUCY CHRISTOPHER**

In this poignant novel, Lucy Christopher explores the extraordinary attachment between a young girl and a wild bird. 13-year-old Isla doesn't want to think about the fact that her dad may be dying until she meets Isthmi, a young swan who can't fly.

#### **About the author**

After various attempts at being an actor, a coffee maker, a waitress and a nature guide, Lucy earned a distinction in a Creative Writing MA. In her spare time, Lucy helps run a children's wildlife group at Newport Wetland.

Waterstone's bookseller Kate in Oxford said,  
'What a charmer! It has a wide range of appeal, with the family drama unfolding and the bond with the swan is really touching. I can see myself recommending this to lots of different readers'.

### **THE GREAT HAMSTER MASSACRE BY KATIE DAVIES**

A natural and honest version of life's events from the perspective of a young girl - from her suspicions about her neighbours, to her rocky friendship with the girl next door; from the sudden death of her granny to her relentless quest for a pet hamster. *The Great Hamster Massacre* is a bittersweet but hilariously funny domestic tale.

### **About the author**

Katie is the wife of comedian Alan Davies and recently gave birth to their first child. She is a literary agent who has also written for radio. *The Great Hamster Massacre* is the first in a charming series of pet-related dilemmas drawn from real-life experiences of friends and family.

Waterstone's bookseller Annalie in Godalming said,

'A truly sweet story and a lovely insight into the innocent minds of young children. I was chuckling along to this on the train - got stared at by quite a few people! It's great to see such quality of storytelling for a younger audience. I can't think of single criticism.'

### **THE GIRL WHO COULD FLY BY VICTORIA FORESTER**

Piper McCloud can fly, but even at her top-secret, maximum-security school for kids with exceptional abilities she's special, and there are consequences.

### **About the author**

Victoria Forester lives in Los Angeles with her husband. She has spent most of her time writing screenplays; this is her first book.

Waterstone's bookseller John in Winchester said,

'This was like *The Wizard of Oz* mixed with *Little House on the Prairie*, with a dose of *The X-Files* and the phrase, 'Brandeen, get off the dang roof!' continually flitting through my head. Very well written and the style was great.'

### **SEVEN SORCERERS BY CARO KING**

Enter the Drift, a land filled with the fabulous and the dreadful; tombfolk, mudmen and the spirits of the seven sorcerers who once ruled the land. Our heroine must cross the Drift to retrieve her brother, stolen by the bogeyman and taken to the terrible House of Strood.

### **About the author**

Caro tackled a series of widely varied jobs before joining the Civil Service, working in the Official Receiver's Office. She now works part-time and lives in Surrey with her husband, writing and restoring their Edwardian house.

Waterstone's bookseller Mary in Hitchin said,

'I will be recommending this to all that will listen. To escape to an exotic world and be invited to so many adventures was fantastic. I really didn't want to put this down - so I didn't. I read it all in one sitting.'

### **LOVE, AUBREY BY SUZANNE LAFLEUR**

Something terrible has happened and 11-year-old Aubrey is on her own. She's determined to hide away and take care of herself, because facing the truth is too much to bear. *Love, Aubrey* is a must-read with the emotional power of *Before I Die*, the readability of *Gathering Light* and the comfort of *Little Women*.

### **About the author**

Suzanne grew up in Massachusetts, where she used to read her stories out loud to anyone who would listen. She began writing her first novel *Love, Aubrey* at graduate school and now lives in Manhattan, where she works at The Anderson School, a New York City Public School for gifted children.

Waterstone's bookseller Emma in Chichester said,  
'I really enjoyed this as a study of a young girl's emotional ups and downs given an impossible and heart wrenching situation to deal with. I think the author has handled it with wonderful delicacy and Aubrey is a really fascinating character.'

### **THE TOYMAKER BY JEREMY DE QUIDT**

What good is a toy that will wind down? What if you could put a heart in one? A real heart? From the moment Mathias finds a mysterious piece of paper he is entangled in devious plots and pursued by the sinister Dr. Leiter and his devilish toys. *The Toymaker* is a truly chilling story that will haunt you long after you reach the end.

#### **About the author**

*The Toymaker* was written after the author Jeremy was asked to do some story-telling at a local school. He went in and each week told them a new chapter of a story he had begun writing especially for them - that story became his first published work.

Waterstone's bookseller Rachel at Hatchards Piccadilly said,  
'Amazing! This is the kind of book you want to read but fear nobody is writing like this any longer. It's an atmospheric, spine-tingling, extraordinarily well-written adventure with a very dark heart.'

### **DESPERATE MEASURES BY LAURA SUMMERS**

Vicky and Rhianna are twins but they couldn't be more different. For their fourteenth birthday, Vicky wants a card from the hottest boy in school. Rhianna, brain-damaged at birth, wants a Furby. Instead they get a nasty shock - their foster parents can't cope and it looks as if Vicky and Rhianna and their younger brother Jamie will have to be split up. How can they stay together?  
Desperate times call for desperate measures ...

#### **About the author**

Laura Summers grew up in South London and was a teacher before turning to writing full time. She has written extensively for many popular children's television series and was recently nominated for a children's BAFTA for one of her scripts for *The Little Princess* - a pre-school animation series based on the picture books by Tony Ross. Laura now lives in North Devon with her husband and children and when not writing loves to draw and paint.

Waterstone's bookseller Jessica in Guildford said,  
'I really enjoyed this - I was absolutely gripped throughout and it felt like a very honest read. It had the right combination of story and character, with enough adventure to recommend it to readers who like their novels fast paced, but also handles very serious issues in a serious and legitimate way.'

### **SUPERHUMAN: METEORITE STRIKE BY A.G. TAYLOR**

Introducing mesmerizing heroes with mind-blowing powers, this roller-coaster read of chilling conspiracies and secret organizations is the perfect escape for anyone who's longed to be just a little bit special.

#### **About the author**

Andrew Taylor was born in New Zealand and grew up in England, and has worked as a teacher in England, Poland, South Korea and Australia. He lives with his girlfriend, her whippet and his Italian greyhound. This is his debut novel.

Waterstone's bookseller Sue in Peterborough said,  
'I gave this to one of my 12-year-old boys and he could not put it down! His verdict? The best book he's read since Silverfin.'

**THE CROWFIELD CURSE BY PAT WALSH**

What happens when you bury an angel? It's 1347 and Will, an orphan boy, lives at Crowfield Abbey. When two hooded strangers arrive at Crowfield asking questions about the angel's grave, Will is drawn into a world of dangerous Old Magic. *The Crowfield Curse* is a thrilling clash between the forces of old natural magic and new ideas of Christianity.

**About the author**

Pat spent summers and school holidays working on archaeological digs, took an archaeology degree and spent most of her life since then working as an archaeologist. From the age of twelve she has written short stories based in history and fantasy, and *The Crowfield Curse* is her first novel for children.

Waterstone's bookseller Roz in Wakefield said,  
'A fantastic book if you like medieval history - I was fascinated by the authentic detail. I read the book straight through and really hope there's a sequel.'

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