

****Strictly embargoed until 20.00 GMT, Wednesday 10th February 2010****

KATIE DAVIES SCOOPS WATERSTONE'S CHILDREN'S BOOK PRIZE

Debut author Katie Davies has won one of the most valuable and prestigious children's book awards in the country for her tale of a girl's relentless quest for a pet hamster.

The Great Hamster Massacre was announced as the winner of the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize 2010 by Children's Laureate Anthony Browne in an evening ceremony at Waterstone's Piccadilly, on Wednesday 10th February. Anthony Browne described the book as "a funny and touching story told very convincingly and honestly from the point of view of a young girl."

Waterstone's Children's Buying Manager, Sarah Clarke, praised the novel for its sweetness, humour and acute observations about adults: "*The Great Hamster Massacre* is a wonderful book and an exciting winner, particularly as this is the first time in the history of the prize that a book written for a younger audience has won. This was the closest competition we've ever had, but in the end Katie Davies' brilliant execution in telling her sweet and funny story won the judges over. We were really pleased to see such a strong plot and honest characterisation in a book meant for younger readers; it's something we'd definitely like to see continue."

Davies, a former literary agent who has also written and performed comedy sketches for BBC Radio 4's *One* programme, said: "I'm as happy as I am surprised. I keep catching sight of myself in shop windows, grinning like an idiot. I haven't won anything since the St Helen's C of E sack race in 1985. Thanks very much to Waterstone's, and to everyone who helped me write it."

Beating off stiff competition from a nine-strong shortlist, *The Great Hamster Massacre* was published earlier this year, and has already received rave reviews within the industry. Caroline Horn, Children's News Editor of *The Bookseller*, said: "Katie Davies is an authentic new voice in the children's world. *The Great Hamster Massacre* is funny, moving and real – I look forward to reading her next book."

Celebrating its sixth year, the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize was created to champion new and emerging talent in children's writing. As well as a £5000 cash prize – one of the most valuable for children's writing in the UK – the winner sees a significant boost in sales, and the promise of ongoing commitment to their writing career from Waterstone's 316 branches nationwide.

Davies, 31, was born in Newcastle upon Tyne. She now lives in North London with her husband, the comedian Alan Davies, and their new baby. *The Great Hamster Massacre* was inspired by her own begging campaign for two Russian Dwarf hamsters in 1989. It is the first in a series of pet-related dilemmas drawn from real-life experiences of friends and family. The next title – *The Great Rabbit Rescue* – is due to be published this autumn.

**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.

The nine shortlisted authors who competed 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)

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
