



**Branford boase award 20th anniversary**

**The SHORTLIST 2019**

**Judges’ comments**

**The House with Chicken Legs**

**Sophie Anderson edited by Rebecca Hill and Becky Walker**

*Usborne: 9+*

A beautifully told, original take on the tale of Baba Yaga this timeless story of death and grief and the zest for life stars a sentient house with chicken legs.

**‘I read it in a single sitting’; ‘the pace is gentle, unlike some myth stories, but it holds your attention all the way through’; ‘full of the beautiful details that pull a story together’; ‘there’s a warm bath feel to it!’.**

**The Train to Impossible Places**

**P.G. Bell edited by Rebecca Hill and Becky Walker**

*Usborne: 8+*

When a magical train drives through her hallway it’s the start of an extraordinary adventure for science-loving Suzy, one that will take her to some very strange places.

**‘bursting with ideas’; ‘I love the energy and the characters are strong enough to keep you engaged; ‘the author has a strong grasp of how to tell a story’; ‘a great book to read aloud’.**

**Rosie Loves Jack**

**Mel Darbon edited by Sarah Stewart**

*Usborne* (YA)

A contemporary love story starring Rosie, who is 16 and has Down’s syndrome; and Jack, who attends the same college in a specialist unit. When Jack is sent away, Rosie is determined to see him again, whatever it takes.

**‘I was expecting it to be sentimental, but it isn’t at all’; ‘Rosie’s voice is unique and disarming’; ‘every teenager should read this’; ‘feels totally authentic’.**

**The Goose Road**

**Rowena House edited by Mara Bergman**

*Walker Books* (9+)

Set in France during the First World War, this novel tells of Angelique and her belief that her brother Pascal will return from the trenches to take over the family farm.  She is determined to keep the farm and the herd of geese he loves so much safe for him.

**‘the set-up is excellent and there’s real depth to the story’; ‘shows huge intelligence in the understanding of her characters; ‘the relationships are tender and real’; ‘I really want to read it again’.**

**I Am Thunder**

**Muhammad Khan edited by Lucy Pearse**

*Macmillan* (YA)

Bright but shy Muzna is the sixteen-year-old only child of Pakistani parents now settled in Britain. Her father wants her to become a doctor whereas she can only think about her writing. The story changes course when Muzna gets dangerously over-involved in a manipulative terrorist cell.

**‘a difficult subject handled really sensitively; ‘it’s an “issues” book but I really wanted to get to the end, really believed in Muzna’; ‘the dialogue is very authentic’ ‘a really hopeful story’.**

**Orphan Monster Spy**

**Matt Killeen edited by Sarah Stewart and Kendra Levin**

*Usborne* (YA)

When Sarah’s mother is shot dead, there’s no time to grieve. A Jew in Nazi Germany, she uses her talent as an actress to become a school-girl spy, though she’s keenly aware that her life counts very little to her spy-master.

**‘a chillingly good spy story, very well told’; ‘it explores an area well-covered in fiction but feels very fresh’; ‘original and contemporary in feel despite the war setting’; ‘a good read’.**

**The Boy at the Back of the Class**

**Onjali Q Raúf edited by Lena McCauley**

*Orion Children’s Books* (7+)

The arrival of a new boy in class, who doesn’t speak, or smile, and disappears at break times, intrigues the narrator of this book and when she finds out that his family are lost somewhere in Europe, she and her friends decide to help.

**‘very charming’; ‘a beautifully structured children’s book’; ‘the story pushes you forward’; ‘full of hope’.**

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