

# The Branford Boase Award



**\*\* UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 GMT THURSDAY 28 APRIL 2022 \*\***

## **BRANFORD BOASE AWARD: THE SHORTLIST 2022**

### **Shortlist announced for the award that identifies the most exciting new writers for children**

- **The year's outstanding debut authors for children on the shortlist for the 2022 Branford Boase Award**
- **2022 shortlist reflects notable change in the types of story being told and huge authorial ambition**
- **Longest shortlist ever in year of record submissions**

The shortlist for the **2022 Branford Boase Award** is announced today, Thursday 28 April 2022. Founded in 2000 to commemorate author **Henrietta Branford** and influential Walker Books editor **Wendy Boase**, the **Branford Boase Award** is awarded annually to the author of the year's outstanding debut novel for children. Uniquely, it also honours the editor of the winning title and highlights the importance of the editor in nurturing new talent.

Each year the **Branford Boase Award** identifies the most talented and exciting new authors for the young, with past shortlists reading like a 'Who's Who' of contemporary children's literature. Winners and shortlisted authors include **Meg Rosoff, Muhammad Khan, Philip Reeve, Frances Hardinge, Patrick Ness, M.G. Leonard**, and **Marcus Sedgwick**.

2022 saw a record number of submissions. From a longlist of 24, the judges have chosen eight to shortlist, making this the longest shortlist in the award's history. As ever, the subject matter is very broad and there are books for readers aged 7 to 17: family dramas, fantasy adventure, science fiction and anarchic comedy.

The shortlist for the 2022 award in full:

**Skin of the Sea** by Natasha Bowen, edited by Carmen McCullough and Tricia Lin (Penguin)

*Rooted in West African mythology and history, **Skin of the Sea** is a reimagining of *The Little Mermaid*. The judges admired its epic scale, successful world-building and dextrous use of myth.*

**Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths** by Maisie Chan, edited by Georgia Murray (Piccadilly Press)

*When his grandmother arrives from China it feels like a catastrophe to Danny Chung, but his funny, intelligent Nai Nai turns out to be his best friend. The judges admired the depiction of the inter-generational relationship and felt the author's love for the story she was telling.*

**The Upper World** by Femi Fadugba, edited by Emma Jones, Stephanie Stein & Asmaa Isse (Penguin) YA

*A compelling, ambitious sci-fi thriller set on the streets of South-East London, blending theoretical physics with all-too-human tragedy. The judges admired the way the book flips the traditional urban narrative in a dynamic way, the author's control of the timeline and recreation of teenage voices.*

**Grow** by Luke Palmer, edited by Penny Thomas (Firefly Press) YA

*This challenging novel chronicles the grief of Josh and his mother after his father is killed in a terrorist attack and the attempt to radicalise Josh made by a group of white supremacists. The judges found it powerful, an unflinching exploration of an important subject with a raw sense of newness.*

**The Valley of Lost Secrets** by Lesley Parr, edited by Zöe Griffiths (Bloomsbury) 9+

*Evacuated from London to a Welsh valley Jimmy feels out of place. As hidden secrets emerge, the valley becomes more frightening even than the war. The judges describe this as atmospheric storytelling at its best, a story with an unforgettable sense of place.*

**Digger and Me** by Ros Roberts, edited by Ella Whiddett and Ruth Bennett (Little Tiger) 9+

*A warm-hearted story that explores the importance of family, love, friendship and finding ways to communicate emotions and fears. The judges admired the strong emotional punch and noted the impact of its many tiny observations.*

**The Boy who Made Everyone Laugh** by Helen Rutter, edited by Lauren Fortune (Scholastic) 9+

*Billy Plimpton has a stammer, but he's determined that it isn't going to dictate how he is viewed at his new school or stop him achieving his dream of being a stand-up comic. The judges felt that readers absolutely inhabit Billy's world and admired the touches of detail throughout the story.*

**Grimwood** by Nadia Shireen, edited by Ali Dougal (Simon and Schuster) 7+

*Grimwood is a paradise for animals (or so it seems) which offers the perfect protection for young fox, Ted, and his protective sister, Nancy when they are forced to flee the city by mobster cat, Princess Buttons. The judges were impressed by the anarchic, irreverent, disrespectful tone, and it made them laugh out loud.*

This year's judges are Struan Murray, author and winner of the **2021 Branford Boase Award**; critic Imogen Russell Williams; Farrah Serroukh, Research and Development Director **CLPE**; and Sonia Thompson, Head Teacher at St Matthew's C.E. Primary School, Birmingham. The judging panel is chaired by Julia Eccleshare, children's director of the Hay Festival.

**Julia Eccleshare**, co-founder of award and chair of the judges says, "Each year we are impressed by the quality of new voices and the skilful work done by editors to nurture them. Now in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, the **Branford Boase Award** has become a touchstone for the world of children's books, identifying not just the most talented and promising new authors but the direction of writing for children. No wonder the 2022 shortlist is longer than any previous year: it reflects a moment of noticeable change in the types of stories being told. The authorial ambition demonstrated in these eight books is inspiring as it reflects the writers' understanding of the needs of today's readers; their confidence in those readers' willingness to read outside their own experiences is exhilarating."

See the Judges' Comments for more information on books shortlisted for the 2022 award. The [2022 longlist](#) is listed in full on the **Branford Boase Award** website.

The winner of the **Branford Boase Award** will be announced at a ceremony in central London on Thursday 14 July 2022. The winning author receives a cheque for £1,000 and both author and editor receive an inscribed plaque.

**For further information please contact Andrea Reece on 07807893369 or [andrea.reece@zen.co.uk](mailto:andrea.reece@zen.co.uk)**

#### **Notes to Editors:**

The annual **Branford Boase Award** celebrates the most promising book for seven-year-olds and upwards written by a first-time novelist and also highlights the importance of the editor in the development of new authors. The shortlisted authors may have published other books in another genre – for example, poetry or a picture book – but eligibility for the prize requires that this is their first children's novel.

As well as encouraging publishers to find and promote new writers, the Award sets out to alert readers of all ages to the work of interesting newcomers.

The **Branford Boase Award** was set up in 2000 in memory of prize-winning author **Henrietta Branford** and **Wendy Boase**, editorial director and one of the founders of Walker Books. They worked together on a number of Henrietta's novels, a partnership they greatly enjoyed. Both Henrietta and Wendy died of cancer in 1999.

Running alongside the Branford Boase Award, the **Henrietta Branford Writing Competition** encourages writing talent in under 18s.

The Award is the joint idea of **Julia Eccleshare** and **Anne Marley**. Julia is chair of PLR and director of the Hay Festival children's programme. Anne was a co-director of

Authors Aloud UK and was Head of Children's, Youth & Schools Services for Hampshire Library & Information Service for many years. She has served on many children's book award panels, including the CILIP Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Awards.

The **Branford Boase Award** is sponsored by **Walker Books**.

Last year's winners were Struan Murray and his editor Ben Horslen with **Orphans of the Tide** (Puffin).

**For more information about the award, including a full list of past winners, and the Henrietta Branford Writing Competition visit [www.branfordboaseaward.org.uk](http://www.branfordboaseaward.org.uk).**

**Or contact Andrea Reece on 07807893369 or [andrea.reece@zen.co.uk](mailto:andrea.reece@zen.co.uk)**

**[- ENDS -]**