



Thursday 7 July 2022

**'A brilliant year for stories'**  
**Young winners of the 2022 Henrietta Branford Writing Competition Announced**

Six talented young writers aged between 10 and 16 are the winners of this year's **Henrietta Branford Writing Competition** for Young People.

The **Henrietta Branford Writing Competition** runs in conjunction with the prestigious **Branford Boase Award** and aims to encourage writers of the future, something Henrietta Branford, the award-winning author of **Dimanche Diller** and **Fire, Bed and Bone**, was always keen to do.

Entrants were asked to complete a story begun by last year's **Branford Boase Award** winner, author of **Orphans of the Tide**, Struan Murray. His starter paragraph is full of possibilities: an empty house, fireworks suddenly frozen in time, a figure moving in the garden. It clearly caught the imagination of young writers, attracting over 500 entries.

Struan Murray was hugely impressed by the six winners. He says, 'The quality of the writing really impressed me. These young writers have come up with brilliant ideas and their passion for storytelling leaps off the page. They should all be very proud of themselves.'

Competition judge, Prue Goodwin adds, 'I love reading and I love stories, too, so being asked to judge a story competition seems a perfect task for me. However, this year there were so many stories that I almost felt overwhelmed. But there can only be six winners. After re-reading and much deep consideration, the six were chosen, but congratulations to everyone who submitted an entry.'

The six winners are:

*Superpowers: Villains Go Down* by **Abigail Evans** age 10 years from Newport, Shropshire

Two best friends, Cierra and Mira, chat about clothes, inhalers and .... time stopping! Super-powers abound in Abigail's story (and if the detail about the asthma inhaler seems irrelevant, don't be too sure). A spirited and enjoyable read.

*The Time Beast* by **Ayaan Ali** age 13 years from Ilford, Essex

A seemingly straightforward response to the 'story starter paragraph' Ayaan's story has amusing undertones throughout and its first-person narrator asks some interesting questions, such as, 'Can you save time, when time has stopped?' Very intriguing!

*The Murder of Christine Davidson* by **Cerys Batchelor** age 14 years from Leigh-on-Sea

A chilling tale which gets darker the further you read. A missing daughter, distraught parents and distressed best friend, all mystified. What has happened? Opening and closing with a diary entry, this is a very well-crafted narrative and gripping to the very end.

*A Bargain with Death* by **Ella Ward** age 16 from Leeds

Chess has become popular in children's fiction (think **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**) and Ella's story has echoes of Ingmar Bergman's film, **The Seventh Seal** which features a game of chess with Death. The game appears to be over as Death accepts defeat. A powerful piece of writing, this story lures the reader towards an unexpected final twist.

*Signed, Amber McLeod* by **Meg Shearer** age 11 from Edinburgh

It is often difficult to understand the caprice of city planners but nobody expects a local government official to knock down all the old buildings. The narrator of this story cannot believe what is happening in Edinburgh, her home city, but she knows who is causing parks to be closed and homes destroyed. She decides she'll do something about it and 'Take. Amber. Down.' How Amber's downfall is achieved is told in a tale worthy of Agatha Christie or Ian Fleming.

*A Simulation* by **Ayman Mohammed** age 13 from Slough, Berkshire

Responding directly to the opening paragraph to good effect, this story starts with a very anxious narrator, 'Was it a dream? I pinch myself as hard as I can, still looking at the garden. I winced. This was not a dream. I start to panic.' But as we read on, fear is alleviated by more light-hearted events. All ends happily ending via intertextual reference to a Roald Dahl anti-hero.

The judges also want to highlight the following talented young writers, whose stories are Highly Commended:

### **Highly commended for originality**

*Death's Angel* by Alice Glithero age 17 Solihull

*The Faceless Figure* by Oscar Palmer age 14 Belfast  
*The Girl Who Loved* by Rania Tanveer age 13  
*The Boy and the Stone* by Tom Egerton age 14 Belfast  
*Time Unravalled* by Daniel Jacoby Bournemouth  
*Always was and always will be* by Chhavi Saini age 15 Bexley  
*When Stars Die* by Sapho Reignier age 15 London  
*It's Time for Bed, Dear* by Fatima Al-Andnani age 15 Harrow  
*The Time Travelling Goose* by N. Hendrie age 13 Belfast  
*Untitled* by Eleanor Harvey age 17 Leatherhead  
*The Fox* by Phoebe Milford age 12 Burgess Hill

The winners each receive signed copies of the books on the shortlist for the **2022 Branford Boase Award**.

The winner of the **2022 Branford Boase Award** will be announced on Thursday 14 July at an awards ceremony taking place at CLPE, Webber Street London SE1.

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

#### **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. 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 the outstanding and 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 19s.

The Award is the joint idea of **Julia Eccleshare** and **Anne Marley**. Julia is the director of the children's programme at the Hay Festival and a regular contributor to Radio 4's Front Row and Open Book programmes. Anne is co-founder 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.

Judge **Prue Goodwin** is a consultant and lecturer in literacy learning and children's literature.

**For more information about the award and the Henrietta Branford Writing Competition visit [www.branfordboaseaward.org.uk](http://www.branfordboaseaward.org.uk).**

*The Branford Boase Award gratefully acknowledges support from Walker Books*

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