

The Branford Boase Award



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Longlist announced for the 2026 Branford Boase Award, celebrating the most talented debut writers for children and their editors

Record submissions and a uniquely varied longlist for the award which highlights trends in children's fiction

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The longlist for the **2026 Branford Boase Award** is announced today (Wednesday 21 January 2026). Set up in memory of award-winning author Henrietta Branford and her editor Wendy Boase, one of the founders of Walker Books, the **Branford Boase Award** is given annually to the author and editor of the year's outstanding debut novel for children. The **Branford Boase Award** is the only award to honour the editor of the winning book, highlighting the importance of the editor in nurturing new talent.

Established in 2000, the **Branford Boase Award** is renowned for identifying the most talented authors for young people at the start of their career. Past winners and shortlisted authors have included **Meg Rosoff**, **Frank Cottrell-Boyce**, **Jenny Downham**, and **Struan Murray**, shortlisted for this year's **Nero Book Awards**, as well as **Frances Hardinge**, **Philip Reeve** and **M.G. Leonard**. Recent winners are **Maisie Chan** (2022), **Christine Pillainayagam** (2023), **Nathanael Lessore** (2024) and **Margaret McDonald** (2025).

Previous winning editors on this year's longlist include **Fiona Kennedy**, **Ruth Bennett** and **Ella Whiddett**, and **Bella Pearson**.

This year a record number of books were submitted: 67 books from more than a dozen different publishers. 24 books have made the longlist.

The **Branford Boase Award** spotlights current trends in writing for children and young people and this year's longlist is particularly varied. It features original new fantasy adventure stories such as **Inkbound** by Philippa Leathley, edited by Natalie Doherty (HarperCollins Children's Books); romantasy in Ova Ceren's **The Book of Heartbreak**, edited by 2023's winning editors Ruth Bennett and Ella Whiddett (Hot Key Books); and thoughtful contemporary stories including **The Doughnut Club** by Kristina Rahim, edited by Zoë Griffiths (Nosy Crow). There are illustrated stories,

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such as **Marty Moose** by Claire Powell, edited by Gráinne Clear (Walker Books), alongside stories examining cultural identity, such as **Odd Girl Out** by Tasneem Abdur-Rashid, edited by Rosie Fickling (David Fickling Books).

The 2026 Branford Boase Award longlist in full:

Odd Girl Out by Tasneem Abdur-Rashid, edited by Rosie Fickling (David Fickling Books)

Letty and the Mystery of the Golden Thread by Penny Boxall, edited by Katie Sinfield (Puffin)

Shadow Thieves by Peter Burns, edited by Lucy Courtenay (Farshore)

The Book of Heartbreak by Ova Ceren, edited by Ruth Bennett and Ella Whiddett (Hot Key Books)

Tart by Becki Jayne Crossley, edited by Cathy Liney (Bloomsbury)

How to Roller Skate with One Leg by Ella Dove, illus by Jennifer Jamieson, edited by Anne Marie Ryan (Orchard Books)

The Wicked Lies of Habren Faire by Anna Fiteni, edited by Asmaa Isse (Electric Monkey)

Grumpfort by Jamie Hammond, illus by the author, edited by Sarah Stewart (Usborne)

The Girl Who Raced the World by Nat Harrison, edited by Ruth Bennett (Bonnier)

Evie and Maryam's Family Tree by Janeen Hayat, edited by Bella Pearson (Guppy Books)

The Misadventures of Mina Mahmood by Farhana Islam, illus by Simran Diamond Singh, edited by Asmaa Isse (Farshore)

Love on Sight by Asli Jensen, edited by Shalini Vallepur (Chicken House)

Inkbound by Philippa Leathley, edited by Natalie Doherty (HarperCollins Children's Books)

Gloam by Jack Mackay, edited by Katie Jennings (Rock the Boat)

A Beautiful Terrible Thing by Miranda Moore, edited by Meggie Degurney and Liz Cross (David Fickling Books)

Wildlands by Brogen Murphy, edited by Linas Alsenas (Puffin)

Rock Band Music and Misfits by Leah Osakwe, edited by Mattie Whitehead and Karelle Tobias (Little Tiger)

Marty Moose: First Class by Claire Powell, illus by the author, edited by Gráinne Clear (Walker Books)

The Doughnut Club by Kristina Rahim, edited by Zoë Griffiths (Nosy Crow)

The Girl with Gills by Becca Rogers, edited by Fiona Kennedy (Zephyr)

Run Away With Me by J.L. Simmonds, edited by Amina Parchment-Youssef (Penguin)

The Romantic Tragedies of a Drama King by Harry Trevaldwyn, edited by Emma Jones and Charlie Castelletti (First Ink)

Augmented by Kenechi Udogu, edited by Natasha Brown and Jenny Glencross (Faber)

My Dog by Olivia Wakeford, illus by David Litchfield, edited by Megan Reid (HarperCollins Children's Books)

Chair of the judges and co-founder of the **Branford Boase Award**, **Julia Eccleshare** says, “From a record number of submissions, we are delighted to present our judges with this longlist, which is the most varied in the 25 plus years of the **Branford Boase Award**. In this **National Year of Reading**, we are delighted to be highlighting so many exciting new voices, and stories to appeal to readers of all tastes and abilities. We thank our sponsors **Walker Books** and **ALCS** for enabling the **Branford Boase Award** to continue to promote the best new writers for young people and the talented editors who nurture them.”

This year’s panel of judges will be led by **Margaret McDonald**, who together with her editors Alice Swan and Ama Badu won the **2025 Branford Boase Award** with **Glasgow Boys**. Joining her on the panel are children’s book experts, Katherine Woodfine, author and reviewer for *The Week Junior*; Stephen Dilley, Head of English at Kendrick School, Reading and part of the **UKLA Book Awards** team; and Anjali Patel Lead Advisory Teacher, **CLPE**. The judging panel will be chaired by **Julia Eccleshare**, children’s book consultant, the **Hay Festival**.

The Branford Boase Award is delivered in partnership with the [Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society \(ALCS\)](#) and supported by Walker Books.

The **shortlist** for the Award will be announced on Thursday 23 April 2026. The winner will be announced on Wednesday, 8 July 2026 at an award ceremony at **CLPE** in London.

The **Henrietta Branford Writing Competition**, the annual competition for young people which runs in conjunction with the **Branford Boase Award**, will open on Monday 2 February 2026.

For further information please contact Andrea Reece on 07807893369 or 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 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 18s.

The Award is the joint idea of **Julia Eccleshare** and **Anne Marley**. Julia is children’s director of the Hay Festival and a regular contributor to **Radio 4’s Front Row** and **Open Book** programmes. Anne was Head of Children’s, Youth & Schools Services for **Hampshire**

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Library & Information Service for many years. She has served on numerous children's book award panels, including **the CILIP Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Awards**.

The **2025 Branford Boase Award** was won by Margaret McDonald and her editors Alice Swan and Ama Badu with **Glasgow Boys** (Faber).

About the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society



ALCS is a not-for-profit organisation started by writers for the benefit of all types of writers. Owned by its members, ALCS collects money due for secondary uses of writers' work. It is designed to support authors and their creativity; ensure they receive fair payment and see their rights are respected. It promotes and teaches the principles of copyright and campaigns for a fair deal for writers. It represents over 130,000 members, and since 1977 has paid over £750 million to writers.

For more information visit alcs.co.uk

About Walker Books

Home to books for all ages, **Walker Books** publishes many award-winning authors, illustrators and literary franchises including Patrick Ness, Angie Thomas, Cassandra Clare, Lucy Cousins, Anthony Browne, Anthony Horowitz, *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram, *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, and *Where's Wally?* by Martin Handford. Walker Books is part of the vibrant international **Walker Books Group** that includes **Walker Books Australia; Candlewick Press, Holiday House, Peachtree, and Walker Books US** in America.

For more information about the award, including a full list of past winners, and the **Henrietta Branford Writing Competition** visit www.branfordboaseaward.org.uk .

Or contact Andrea Reece on 07807893369 or andrea.reece@zen.co.uk

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