

The UK's Sunday Times Young Writer Award Names Its 2021 Shortlist



In News by Porter Anderson / January 25, 2022 / Leave a Comment



The shortlist for the 2021 Sunday Times Charlotte Aitken Trust award includes poetry, nonfiction, and three novels.



Image: Sunday Times Charlotte Aitken Trust Young Writer of the Year Award

By Porter Anderson, Editor-in-Chief | @Porter_Anderson

Waterstones' Carvalho: Launching Careers

In the United Kingdom's crowded field of publishing and book awards, the 30th anniversary iteration of the *Sunday Times'* award for writers 35 and younger has adjusted its schedule of activities, as you may remember, so that its 2021 winner will be named and presented this year, in 2022.

Now officially named the *Sunday Times Charlotte Aitken Trust Young Writer of the Year Award*, the program has benefitted from its new sponsorship by the Charlotte Aitken Trust—announced in June—with a doubling of its prize money. The purses in this cycle of the award are worth £10,000 (US\$13,475) for the winner and £1,000 (US\$1,347).



This year, the program opens a new partnership with Waterstones. Potentially the biggest advantage for authors in this program, the new feature will see the shortlisted and winning authors recognized in Waterstones' busy social-media channels and subscription newsletter, which reportedly has more than 1 million recipients. There's also to be in-store attention given to the authors. The Waterstones chain has more than 280 stores.

In a prepared statement for the shortlist announcement, Bea Carvalho, head of fiction at Waterstones, is quoted on the arrival of the shortlist and, in the process of producing her comment, points up an interesting element of the Sunday Times/Aitken Trust program: it recognizes not only fiction but also nonfiction—in this case, Cal Flynn's ecologically perceptive *Islands of Abandonment: Life in the Post-Human Landscape*, which has had jurors' attention in the Baillie Gifford and British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding programs.

"The judges have chosen a brilliant shortlist," writes Carvalho, "which showcases the sheer excellence of new writing being published across genres today: this level of talent amongst emerging writers signals a bright future for literature, bookshops, and readers." The *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year Award




SUBSCRIBE

Sign up to get our FREE email edition, Monday to Friday!

[SUBSCRIBE »](#)

Recommended Articles

-  Mohamed Mbougar Sarr wins the 2021 Prix Goncourt [publishingperspectives.com](#)
-  Crazy Maple Studio Introduces Chapters: Interactive Stories [publishingperspectives.com](#)
-  UNESCO Names 49 Additions to Its Creative Cities Network as Azoulay... [publishingperspectives.com](#)
-  China Reading Launches Qidian Platform for an International Audi... [publishingperspectives.com](#)



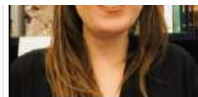
BROWSE POPULAR TOPICS

- Authors
- Bestsellers
- Book Prizes
- Book Sales
- Bookselling
- Children's Books
- Digital Publishing
- Distribution
- Education
- Frankfurt Book Fair
- Literature
- London Book Fair
- Marketing
- Reading
- Rights
- Statistics
- Translation
- Writing

BROWSE COUNTRIES / REGIONS

- Africa
- Asia
- Australia
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- Europe
- France
- Germany
- India
- Italy
- Latin America
- Mexico
- Middle East
- Russia
- Southeast Asia
- Spain
- Turkey
- USA
- UK

and features. The *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year award has helped to launch the careers of some of the most celebrated and beloved writers at work today and it is exciting to think of these young writers joining those ranks.



Bea Carvalho

“We’re particularly thrilled to see Caleb Azumah Nelson, whose *Open Water* was selected by booksellers for the Waterstone Book of the Year 2021 shortlist, as well as *Islands of Abandonment*, which is currently our Nonfiction Book of the Month. All five authors contribute something fresh, vibrant, and vital to our bookshelves and we are grateful for the opportunity to elevate their profiles through this shortlisting, and introduce many more readers to their words.”

The winner will also be offered a 10-week residency with the University of Warwick (where the award’s funding was based before the Charlotte Aitken Trust entered the picture), and a two-year membership at the London Library. The library, which is to host the award ceremony, also offers a one-year membership to each shortlistee. And the British Council partners with the program to include its shortlisted authors in its overseas promotional activity.

Young Writer of the Year 2021 Shortlist



- Megan Nolan, *Acts of Desperation* (Penguin Random House UK/Jonathan Cape)
- Anna Beecher, *Here Comes the Miracle* (Hachette UK/Weidenfeld & Nicolson)
- Cal Flynn, *Islands of Abandonment: Life in the Post-Human Landscape* (HarperCollins UK/William Collins)
- Rachel Long, *My Darling from the Lions* (Pan Macmillan/Picador)
- Caleb Azumah Nelson, *Open Water* (Penguin Random House UK/Viking)

This week, [Granta.com](https://www.granta.com) is expected to publish excerpts from the five shortlisted titles. The *Sunday Times* award is one of the competitions administered by the [Society of Authors](https://www.societyofauthors.org).

The current panel of jurors is led again, of course, by *Sunday Times* literary editor Andrew Holgate. He’s joined by:

- Anthropologist, novelist, and short-story writer Tahmina Anam
- The Chilean writer and Warwick Writing Program assistant professor Gonzalo C. Garcia
- *Sunday Times* and *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer and novelist Claire Lowdon
- Novelist Sarah Moss
- Novelist and essayist Andrew O’Hagan



Jurors joining Andrew Holgate on the panel this year are, from left, Tahmina Anam; Gonzalo C. Garcia; Claire Lowdon; Sarah Moss (Image: Sophie Davidson); and Andrew O’Hagan (Image: Christina Jansen)

The Awards Context for the Young Writer Program

In November, with the announcement of the program’s new timing on the calendar, we looked at how competitive an award like the Young Writer of the Year can become.

In November, as it announced this year’s jurors, the £10,000 program referred to itself as “the UK and Ireland’s most influential prize for young writers,” although its nearest competition, the £20,000 *Dylan Thomas Prize* based at Swansea University in Wales, has been in operation since the 1980s initially as a biennial honor. In 2010, the Dylan Thomas became annual.

With its new shortlist announcement, the *Sunday Times* Charlotte Aitken Trust Young Writer of the Year Award has dubbed itself, “the most influential prize for young writers” without any delimiting factors of market reach, although it’s still limited to British and Irish authors.

The Dylan Thomas is a prize that goes to a writer who is younger than 39, while the *Sunday Times* Charlotte Aitken Young Writer of the Year Award is available to writers who are seven to twenty

Charlotte Aitken Young, which of the 1500 awards is available to writers who are 50 or five years younger. Indeed, the Dylan Thomas' larger cash prize and name-brand advantage may well make it a program more easily recognized outside the United Kingdom, where the *Sunday Times'* good name is not as well known.

The 2021 Dylan Thomas Prize was awarded in May to the American author Raven Leilani for her debut novel, *Luster*. In the United Kingdom, *Luster* is published by [Pan Macmillan/FSG/Picador](#) (January 21).

The *Sunday Times* award is also one of at least two such programs in England that has had a hiatus during its operation. It was founded in 1991 to consider fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and was suspended in 2008. About seven years later, in 2015, it re-emerged with its first new sponsor, Peters Fraser & Dunlop. The next sponsor was the University of Warwick, followed by the current benefactor, the Charlotte Aitken Trust.

Here are past winners:

- Jay Bernard, *Surge* (2020)
- Raymond Antrobus, *The Perseverance* (2019)
- Adam Weymouth, *Kings of the Yukon* (2018)
- Sally Rooney, *Conversations with Friends* (2017)
- Max Porter, *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* (2016)
- Sarah Howe, *Loop of Jade* (2015)
- Ross Raisin, *God's Own Country* (2009)
- Adam Foulds, *The Truth About These Strange Times* (2008)
- Naomi Alderman, *Disobedience* (2007)
- Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: a History of a Fascination* (2004)
- William Fiennes, *The Snow Geese* (2003)
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (2001)
- Sarah Waters, *Affinity* (2000);
- Paul Farley, *The Boy from the Chemist is Here to See You* (1999)
- Patrick French, *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division* (1998)
- Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (1997)
- Katherine Pierpoint, *Truffle Beds* (1996)
- Andrew Cowan, *Pig* (1995)
- William Dalrymple, *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi* (1994)
- Simon Armitage, *Kid* (1993)
- Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge* (1992)
- Helen Simpson, *Four Bare Legs in a Bed and Other Stories* (1991)

And a programming note: *Publishing Perspectives* will be joined by Waterstones managing director [James Dauri](#) in a round table discussion, "Book Publishing Reloaded: Selling Books in a Changed World," on Friday, January 28, a digital program from Italy's [Scuola per Librai Umberto e Elisabetta Mauri](#) program, a "School of Booksellers."

That's at 11 a.m. CET / 10:00 GMT / 5 a.m ET, and the panel also will feature Michael Busch of Germany's Thalia, Andrew Franklin of the UK's Profile Books, Doris Janhsen of Germany's Droemer Knaur, and [Stefano Mauri](#) of Messaggerie Italiane and the publishing group Mauri Spagnol. [Registration is here](#) for the *39esimo Seminario UEM* which begins its programming Friday at 10 a.m. CET / 09:00 GMT / 4 a.m ET.

More from Publishing Perspectives on publishing and book prizes is [here](#), more on the Young Writer Award is [here](#), more on the Dylan Thomas Prize is [here](#), and more from us on the UK market is [here](#).

More on the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on international book publishing is [here](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Porter Anderson

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google+](#)

Porter Anderson is a non-resident fellow of Trends Research & Advisory, and he has been named International Trade Press Journalist of the Year in London Book Fair's International Excellence Awards. He is Editor-in-Chief of *Publishing Perspectives*. He formerly was Associate Editor for *The FutureBook* at London's *The Bookseller*. Anderson was for more than a decade a senior producer and anchor with CNN.com, CNN International, and CNN USA. As an arts critic (National Critics Institute), he was with *The Village Voice*, the *Dallas Times Herald*, and the *Tampa Tribune*, now the *Tampa Bay Times*. He co-founded *The Hot Sheet*, a newsletter for authors, which now is owned and

operated by Jane Friedman.

Tags: [Authors](#), [Book Prize](#), [Dylan Thomas Prize](#), [Fiction](#), [Nonfiction](#), [Poetry](#), [Sunday Times](#), [United Kingdom](#), [University of Warwick](#), [Wales](#), [Young Writer Award](#)

Leave a Comment

Your Comment *

Your Name *

Your Email *

Your Website

SUBMIT

PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES, A PROJECT OF MVB US, INC. | NEWSLETTER@PUBLISHINGPERSPECTIVES.COM

[SUBSCRIBE](#) [ABOUT US](#) [CONTACT](#) [TERMS](#) [PRIVACY POLICY](#) [ADVERTISE](#)

