

Under strict embargo until: 00:01 Thursday 1st March 2018

Tales of unexplained phenomenon and magical witches and warriors win 2018 Blue Peter Book Awards

Real-Life Mysteries and Wizards of Once take top spots for Best Fact and Best Story prize



Thursday 1st March 2018 – *The Wizards of Once* by Cressida Cowell and *Real-Life Mysteries* written by Susan Martineau, illustrated by Vicky Barker, have been revealed as this year's Blue Peter Book Award winners.

Managed by [BookTrust](#), the UK's largest children's reading charity, the immensely popular Blue Peter Book Awards honour amazing authors, imaginative illustrators and the best books for children, published in the last 12 months. The winning titles were voted for by over 500 children from 12 schools across the UK.

Winner of Best Story is: *The Wizards of Once* by Cressida Cowell

Winner of Best Book with Facts is: *Real-Life Mysteries* by Susan Martineau, illustrated by Vicky Barker

Cowell's latest book, chosen by children across the UK for the Best Story prize, tells the tale of Xar and Wish, a young boy Wizard and a young girl Warrior who have been taught since birth to hate each other like poison; and the thrilling tale of what happens when their two worlds collide.

Discussing the award Cressida said: "I am delighted, grateful and proud to have won this year's Blue Peter Award for *The Wizards of Once*. Blue Peter was a huge part of my childhood, and I'm thrilled as nine-year-old me, as well as the grown-up author.

“*The Wizards of Once* was 5 years of research, writing, re-writing and illustrating, and it’s nerve-wracking publishing a book set in a new world, so I’m especially gratified to receive this recognition. Thank you so much to the kids who took the time to read and vote, the teachers and librarians who do so much to support the award in schools, BookTrust for all their dedicated organisation, and Blue Peter not only for setting up the award but for putting reading and creativity at the heart of its programming. To Blue Peter viewers who enjoy reading, telling stories and drawing - keep going! We need you to be the writers and illustrators of the future.”

Winner of Best Books with Facts, *Real-Life Mysteries* explains case files backed up with evidence about the mysterious unsolved cases and encourages you to make up your own mind. From mysteries such as Shackleton's ghostly companion to the Loch Ness Monster.

Author Susan Martineau said: “I’m so thrilled that it was the *Blue Peter* viewers themselves who voted for the book. *Blue Peter* was not only my favourite programme when I was young, but my children’s too. It’s also so brilliant there is an award for a book with facts as well as a fiction prize. Non-fiction doesn’t just tell you stuff, it can fire your imagination and get you thinking in new ways too.”

Illustrator Vicky Barker said: “I am absolutely over the moon to have won the Blue Peter Book Award! I was a huge fan of Blue Peter as a child, so this is such a fantastic honour. Thank you to all of the budding new investigators that chose *Real-Life Mysteries!*”

Jo Law Literacy Coordinator at Church Vale School said: "It has been a huge honour for our children to be selected as part of the judging panel and to represent the voice of children across the country. It has been a challenge and a task that the children and I have taken very seriously. They have embraced every part of the job as judges and have enjoyed reading the books as part of a team during a weekly book club, they have been buzzing with conversation. Their reading stamina has improved greatly and their commitment and enthusiasm towards reading has been amazing, we are very proud of them all. Thank you to Blue Peter for this amazing opportunity"

On Thursday 1st March, the winning three authors/illustrators will appear on a special World Book Day edition of Blue Peter, the UK’s longest running children’s programme in the world. Also appearing on the show are pupils from Church Vale Primary School and award-winning author and illustrator Judith Kerr, who was honoured with a BookTrust Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016. Kerr will receive an extra special Gold Blue Peter badge for her contribution to children’s literature.

Judith Kerr on receiving the Gold Blue Peter badge said: “What a wonderful surprise to be given a Gold Blue Peter Badge. My daughter received a Blue Peter badge many years ago, so I’m one up on her with my Gold one!”

Blue Peter editor, **Ewan Vinnicombe** said: “It’s been another fantastic selection of titles for the Blue Peter Book Awards 2018. It was great to see the enthusiasm the children had for voting in our awards and I’m thrilled that Gold badge holder Cressida Cowell can now add a Blue Peter Book Award to her collection. I think we’ve inspired some readers to become the next set of mystery solvers by reading the Best Fact Book winner by Susan Martineau, illustrated by Vicky Barker. Judith Kerr’s Gold badge is very well deserved with her books as popular now with our audience as ever.”

The Blue Peter Book Awards have been celebrating children's literature since 2000. BookTrust has managed the Blue Peter Book Awards since 2008. The 2017 winners were Kieran Larwood and David Wyatt who won Best Story with *Podkin One Ear* and David Long and Kerry Hyndman who won Best Book with Facts for *Survivors*.

Diana Gerald, CEO, BookTrust commented: "We're delighted to work with Blue Peter on another brilliant award, with the amazing talents of Cressida, Susan and Vicky, who continue to produce brilliant books encouraging so many young children to read and love stories."

Keep up-to-date with the Awards at www.booktrust.org.uk/bluepeter and on Twitter by following @Booktrust and #bluepeter

[Ends]

Press Contacts: Sinéad Gosai, Press Officer, BookTrust, sinead.gosai@booktrust.org.uk, +44 (0)20 7801 8849

Notes to Editors

Best Story

1. *The Island at the End of Everything* by Kiran Millwood Hargrave (Chicken House)
2. *Wed Wabbit* by Lissa Evans (David Fickling Books)
3. *The Wizards of Once* by Cressida Cowell (Hodder Children's Books)

Best book with facts

1. *Corpse Talk: Ground-Breaking Scientists* by Adam Murphy & Lisa Murphy (David Fickling Books)
2. *Real-Life Mysteries* by Susan Martineau, illustrated by Vicky Barker (B Small Publishing)
3. *Beyond the Sky: You and the Universe* by Dara Ó Briain, illustrated by Dan Bramall (Scholastic)

Additional quotes from pupils at Church Vale School

"I enjoyed reading the different books that I didn't know existed and know they've become some of my favourite books!" Lennon

"I enjoyed finding out about the 6 different authors, authors I didn't know about before. Now I want to find out about the other books they have written" Poppy

"I enjoyed reading at book club because we got to do it altogether. It was exciting to read brand new books" Blaze

"It gave us a challenge and we were set mini challenges each week. I kept reading because I knew it was an important job from Blue Peter!" Ruby

Blue Peter is the longest running children's programme in the world and will celebrate its 60th anniversary in October 2018. The programme has a host of special events taking place across the next 8 months to honour the occasion with the annual Book Awards and support of children's literacy being an important part of its Big Birthday year.

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. We work to inspire a love of reading in children because we know that reading can transform lives. Each year we reach **3.4 million children** across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a

love of reading. Every parent receives a BookTrust book in their baby's first year. Our books are delivered via health, library, schools and early year's practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. Reading for pleasure has a dramatic impact on educational outcomes, well-being and social mobility, and is also a huge pleasure in itself. We are committed to starting children on their reading journey and supporting them throughout. booktrust.org.uk

Cressida Cowell is the author and the illustrator of the bestselling How to Train Your Dragon book series, and the author of the Emily Brown picture books, illustrated by Neal Layton. How to Train Your Dragon has sold over 8 million books worldwide in 38 languages. It is also an award-winning DreamWorks film series, and a TV series shown on Netflix and CBBC. The first book in Cressida's new series, The Wizards of Once (also signed by DreamWorks), is a number one bestseller. Cressida grew up in London and on a small, uninhabited island off the west coast of Scotland and she now lives in Hammersmith with her husband, three children and a dog called Pigeon.

Susan Martineau started her career as a book editor for companies such as Robert Hale and BBC Books. Susan is the author of all the titles in the Gruesome Series and acknowledges the lively contribution her daughter, Alice, and son, William, who are definitely keen grossologists! She has also written three titles in the animal activity series – Horses, Dogs, Cats – and most recently the new *Science Around You* series, exploring fun science in and around the house. Her family spent several years living in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, but have now re-settled in the UK.

Vicky Barker graduated from Liverpool John Moores University in 2006. Working at Usborne Publishing for 5 and a half years where she worked on a wide range of books from novelty, baby and activity books to producing illustrations for older fiction. Making the freelance leap in 2012, she teamed up with b small shortly after. Together they have collaborated on the new Paper Toys series, as well as a whole bunch of exciting new series and titles coming soon. Vicky has also produced work for Catnip, Really Decent Books and BOOM! Studios, as well as continuous work for Usborne and spends her time living between Liverpool and Los Angeles.