**Embargo: Thursday 8th November at 18:00**

**Is fiction actually stranger than fact? Decide for yourself as the 2019 Blue Peter Book Awards contenders are revealed**



8th November – Explosive experiments, Egyptian colours, sneezing fits, fitting in, standing out and unbreakable family bonds, are all themes from the cracking line up of titles that makes up the 2019 Blue Peter Book Award shortlist.

This year though, fiction may actually appear to be stranger than fact, with magical and mystical goings on in The House with the Chicken Legs and grumpy crows in The Clockwork Crow. Anatomy and atomic ingredients still do make for a gripping reading, with equally interesting facts and exciting experiments with elements to find out about.

This month it’s non-fiction November, so it’s the perfect opportunity to be taken on a journey through the pages and a chance to celebrate the fantastic factual books out there and get children excited about books that are packed full with figures and information. It's a genre that covers a huge range of topics and may often help get reluctant readers excited too, who may prefer books that are based on real life rather than made up stories.

Fighting for the title of Best Book with Facts are: T*he Element in the Room* written by Mike Barfield and illustrated by Lauren Humphry, *The Colours of History* written Clive Gifford and illustrated by Marc-Etienne Peintre and Professor Astro Cat's third installation, *Human Body Odyssey* written by Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman.

Meanwhile, *The House with Chicken Legs* written by Sophie Anderson, *The Clockwork Crow* written by Catherine Fisher and *The Boy at the Back of the Class* written by Onjali Rauf are all competing for the Best Story accolade. Go on an adventure with Baba Yaga and Marinka, guiding the dead through The Gate and up to the stars, discover a magical snow-bound Wales with Seren and a mechanical talking bird or put yourself in the shoes of 9-year-old Ahmet, a refugee from Syria who has just arrived in England.

Managed by [BookTrust](http://www.booktrust.org.uk), 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.

**Diana Gerald, CEO, BookTrust said**: “We’re delighted to be involved in the Blue Peter Book Awards again this year, helping to excite and encourage children everywhere to love reading and discover more about science, the human body and the journey to the afterlife.”

The awards are rigorously judged by school children across the country. This year over 760 schools applied to be a part of the judging process. The winning titles, voted for by over 300 children from 12 schools across the UK, will be revealed live on Blue Peter on World Book Day on Thursday 7th March 2019 with the winning authors and illustrators appearing on the special awards episode of the show.

**Alex T. Smith, Author, Illustrator and Blue Peter Book Awards judge said:** “It’s been a thrill to be part of the Blue Peter Book Award judging panel this year, and such a delight to work with the other judges. I have so loved seeing all the incredible books which were longlisted. Whittling these brilliant titles down to the shortlist has been incredibly tricky but I know we’ve managed to put together a shortlist which has something for everyone. We can’t wait to share it with the world!”

**Mike Barfield, Author of *The Element in the Room* said:** “This is such a thrill. There are lots of wonderful books out there and this is a very short shortlist. I loved *Blue Peter* as a child and again as a dad, watching it with my own children. It's a great programme and an even greater honour. Thank you so much.”

**Onjali Q. Rauf, Author of *The Boy at the Back of the Class* said:** “I'm utterly over the moon and floating somewhere nearby Neptune at being nominated for this wonderful shortlist! Blue Peter was such an innate part of my childhood, that I can't help but feel honoured *The Boy at the Back of the Class* was even considered a worthy enough a contender for an award bearing its name. The trauma of never being able to get my hands on some double-sided sticky tape as a child, has well and truly been diminished! My deep gratitude to all the judges, readers, reviewers and booksellers who have helped make this happen.”

The Blue Peter Book Awards have been celebrating children’s literature since 2000. BookTrust has managed the Blue Peter Book Awards since 2008. The 2018 winners were *The Wizards of Once* by Cressida Cowelland *Real-Life Mysteries* writtenby Susan Martineau, illustrated by Vicky Barker.

Keep up-to-date with the Awards at [www.booktrust.org.uk/bluepeter](http://www.booktrust.org.uk/bluepeter) and on Twitter by following @Booktrust and #BPBA

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**Notes to Editors**

**Best book with facts**

* The Element in the Room by Mike Barfield and illustrated by Lauren Humphry
* The Colours of History by Clive Gifford and Marc-Etienne Peintre
* Professor Astro Cat's Human Body Odyssey by Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman

**Best story**

* The House with Chicken Legs by Sophie Anderson
* The Clockwork Crow by Catherine Fisher
* The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Rauf

**Blue Peter** is the longest running children’s magazine programme in the world. As well as the Book Awards, the show’s family of presenters, live studio home, amazing competitions, incredible challenges, live music, interviews with celebrities, access behind the scenes, pets, makes and bakes, free games online and most importantly its commitment to the audience are all long standing elements of this iconic show. [www.bbc.co.uk/bluepeter](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bluepeter)

**BookTrust** is dedicated to getting children reading because we know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. Their early language development is supported, and they also do better at school.

We are the UK’s largest children’s reading charity; each year we reach 3.4 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading, because we know that reading can transform lives.

We work with a variety of partners to get children excited about books, rhymes and stories, because if reading is fun, children will want to do it. Our books are delivered via health, library, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit**.** [booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)