**Press Release: Embargoed until 09.00 GMT on Thursday 12 November 2020**

**BOOKTRUST REPRESENTS & WATERSTONES CHILDREN’S LAUREATE CRESSIDA COWELL REVEAL #PASSTHEPEN PAIRINGS TO SHOWCASE NEW CREATIVES OF COLOUR**

***#PassThePen: 16 – 20 November 2020***



**London, Thursday 12 November 2020**: BookTrust Represents and Waterstones Children’s Laureate, Cressida Cowell, are delighted to reveal the pairings for #PassThePen, a new social media campaign designed to help promote visibility, champion new voices and generate book sales for emerging authors and illustrators of colour.

More than twenty of the most dynamic, up and coming creatives in the children’s book world will take over the Instagram channel of an established literary star for a day from 16 – 20 November, and introduce themselves to their followers, give an insight into their inspirations, and showcase their extraordinary work.

**Onjali Q Raúf, author of *The Night Bus Hero*, and one of the Instagram hosts for #PassThePen, said:**

“By enabling those who have made it to forefront of the literary world to #passthepen to new hopefuls, this campaign can perhaps help do what the universe of literature always seeks to do, just that little bit faster: open our eyes, minds and hearts, to a galaxy of beautiful new stories, that otherwise and too often, may go unheard.”

The #PassThePen pairings announcement follows new research released yesterday from *BookTrust Represents Interim Research* and *CLPE’s Reflecting Realities Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children’s Literature* showing that whilst there has been some positive progress, there remains significant under-representation in children’s books, and the challenge that remains for the wider industry. The report revealed the number of authors and illustrators of colour published in the UK in the last three years growing to over 8%, but advised there remains a long way to go. BookTrust’s figures also illustrate that the number of British debut creators of colour has increased from 12 (2017) to 24 (2019), but nearly half are self-published or by a hybrid publisher.

The authors and illustrators of colour selected for #PassThePen, and their Instagram hosts, are:

Monday 16 November

* **Jasbinder Bilan** author of *Tamarind & The Star of Ishta* (Chicken House) paired with **Cressida Cowell**
* **Aisha Bushby,** author of *Moonchild: Voyage of the Lost and Found* (Egmont), paired with **Holly Smale**
* **A.M. Dassu**, author of *Boy Everywhere* (Old Barn Books)paired with **Juno Dawson**
* **Allen Fatimaharan,** illustrator of *Llama Out Loud!* (Egmont) and *My Hair* (Faber), paired with **Rob Biddulph**
* **Margaret Sturton**, author and illustrator of *A Fox Called Herbert* (Andersen Press) paired with **Benji Davies**

Tuesday 17 November

* **Hiba Noor Khan**, author of *The Little War Cat* (Macmillan Children’s Books) paired with **Dermot O’Leary**
* **Jen Khatun**, illustrator of*Sona Sharma, Very Best Big Sister* (Walker Books)paired with **Nadiya Hussain**
* **Hannah Lee**, author of *My Hair* (Faber) paired with **Laura Dockrill**
* **Annabelle Sami**, author of *Agent Zaiba Investigates: The Missing Diamonds* (Stripes) and *Llama Out Loud!* (Egmont), paired with **Frank Cottrell-Boyce**

Wednesday 18 November

* **Kereen Getten**, author of *When Life Gives You Mangoes* (Pushkin Children's Books)paired with **Kiran Millwood Hargrave**
* **Onyinye Iwu**, illustrator of *Too Small Tola* (Walker Books) paired with **Dapo Adeola**
* **Poonam Mistry**, illustrator of *You’re Strong With Me* (Lantana) paired with **Chris Riddell**
* **Serena Patel**, author of *Anisha, Accidental Detective* (Usborne)paired with **Robin Stevens**

Thursday 19 November

* **Lucy Farfort**, illustrator of *Afraid of the Dark* (Caterpillar Books) paired with **Jim Field**
* **Sharna Jackson**, author of *MICDROP: A High Rise Mystery* (Knights Of)paired with **Greg James** & **Chris Smith**
* **EL Norry**, author of *Voices: Son of the Circus: A Victorian Story* (Scholastic) paired with **Katherine Rundell**
* **Viola Wang**, author/illustrator of *Rabbit Bright* (Hodder Children’s Books) paired with **Emily Gravett**

Friday 20 November

* **Momoko Abe**, author/illustrator of *Avocado Asks* (Orchard Books)paired with **Jen Campbell**
* **Sandra A. Agard** author of *Trailblazers: Harriet Tubman* (Stripes) paired with **Onjali Q. Raúf**
* **Rashmi Sirdeshpande**, author of *Dosh* (Wren & Rook)and author/illustrator of *Never Show a T-Rex a Book* (Puffin) paired with **Holly Bourne**

Point five on Cressida Cowell’s [Waterstones Children’s Laureate Charter](https://www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2019/july/every-child-has-the-right-to-read-cressida-cowells-giant-to-do-list-as-the-new-waterstones-childrens-laureate/) is that ‘*every child has the right to see themselves reflected in a book*’. Integral to this is the visibility of authors and illustrators of colour to readers, and so moving forward Cressida will continue to #PassThePen by running a monthly social media guest takeover on her Instagram account.

Marking the launch of the #PassThePen on Monday 16 November, Cressida and BookTrust Represents will release a Christmas reading list on [www.childrenslaureate.org.uk](http://www.www.childrenslaureate.org.uk) selected from the titles submitted for the campaign.

For further details on the list, please visit [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk) and to search and support the campaign on social media, please follow #PassThePen.

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

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**About the Waterstones Children’s Laureate**

The Waterstones Children’s Laureate is managed by BookTrust, the UK’s largest children’s reading charity, and sponsored by Waterstones. It is awarded once every two years to an eminent writer or illustrator of children’s books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field, and celebrates children’s literature as an art form, recognising its contribution to culture and bringing it to the attention of a wider audience.

This prestigious role was originally created by Poet Laureate Ted Hughes and author Michael Morpurgo. The ‘League of Laureates’ are the foremost representatives of children’s literature, showcasing the extraordinary and dynamic art form and its rich contribution to culture in the UK. Each Laureate brings their own passion to the prestigious role and focuses on their own particular themes to create a unique legacy.

The current Waterstones Children’s Laureate is Cressida Cowell, the international bestselling author and illustrator of the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* series and author of the *Emily Brown* picture books. The previous ten Laureates are: Quentin Blake (1999-2001), Anne Fine (2001-2003), Michael Morpurgo (2003-2005), Jacqueline Wilson (2005-2007), Michael Rosen (2007-2009), Anthony Browne (2009-2011), Julia Donaldson (2011-2013), Malorie Blackman (2013-2015), Chris Riddell (2015-2017), Lauren Child (2017-2019).

**About Cressida Cowell**

Cressida Cowell is the number one bestselling author-illustrator of the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* book series, and the author of the *Emily Brown* picture books, illustrated by Neal Layton. She has sold over 11 million books worldwide in 38 languages. *How to Train Your Dragon* is also an award-winning billion-dollar DreamWorks film series, and a TV series shown on Netflix and CBBC; *The Wizards of Once* has also been optioned for film by DreamWorks.

Cressida is an ambassador for the National Literacy Trust, a trustee for World Book Day and a founder patron of the Children’s Media Foundation. She has won numerous prizes for her books, including the Blue Peter Book Award and the Ruth Rendell Award for Championing Literacy. She is a honorary fellow of Keble College Oxford, and has a honorary doctorate from the University of Brighton. She 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.

**About BookTrust**

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 3.9 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 services, libraries, 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)

**About Waterstones**

Waterstones is the UK and Ireland’s leading high street bookseller with 293 bookshops, including Foyles, Hatchards, Hodges Figgis and branches in Ireland, Brussels and Amsterdam. It is the only national specialist book retailer of scale in the UK, with the average sized shop carrying a range of around 30,000 individual books and with over 200,000 titles in the largest shop. Waterstones.com | @Waterstones

**About Hachette Children’s Group**

Hachette Children's Group is one of the largest children's publishers in the UK, with an excellent track record in creating bestselling and award-winning books for children.

The Group aims to cater for every child, with baby and pre-school books, picture books, gift, fiction, non-fiction, series fiction, books for the school and library market and licensed publishing and comprises the imprints Hodder Children’s Books, Orchard Books, Orion Children’s Books, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, Quercus Children’s Books, Pat-a-Cake, Wren & Rook, Franklin Watts and Wayland Books.

The Group publishes a wide range of authors, illustrators, series and licenses including: Cressida Cowell, Kes Gray, Jim Field, Jessica Townsend, Onjali Raúf, Kiran Millwood Hargrave, Matthew Syed, Bryony Gordon, David Almond, Lauren Child, Patrice Lawrence, Dermot O’Leary, Francesca Simon, Alex T. Smith, Zanib Mian, Nadiya Hussain, Giles Andreae, Piers Torday, Rainbow Magic, Beast Quest and Pokémon.

Hachette Children’s Group is also the publisher of author Enid Blyton, and the owner of Enid Blyton Entertainment.

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