

**Embargoed until 09.00 BST on Thursday 16 April 2020**

## **BookTrust extends Waterstones Children's Laureate Cressida Cowell's tenure until 2022**

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**Thursday 16 April:** [BookTrust](#), the UK's largest children's reading charity, has today announced the extension of Cressida Cowell's tenure as Waterstones Children's Laureate by an additional 12 months. The bestselling author and illustrator of the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* series will continue in the role until June 2022.

In response to the exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, the decision to extend Cressida's tenure to three years will ensure that the ambitions laid out at the start of her tenure can become a reality and make a tangible difference to children's lives.

On appointment, Cressida unveiled her Laureate Charter with the message that the magic of books and reading must urgently be available to absolutely everyone with plans to campaign for statutory school libraries and helping develop children's creative intelligence, and has since been working behind the scenes to bring this 'magical to-do list' to life with new projects.

Last month, as the UK went into lockdown, Cressida launched with BookTrust a new digital hub – [BookTrust HomeTime](#) – to entertain children and families to enjoy book-related activities at home with drawing lessons, competitions, quizzes and readings – including daily reading of the very first *How to Train Your Dragon* from Cressida's writing shed.

### **Cressida Cowell, Waterstones Children's Laureate (2019-2022), said:**

*"Thank you to BookTrust for extending my Laureateship so that we can take this time to adapt our plans in progress to best face this challenging moment. It is when times are hardest that we need the transformative magic of books and creativity the most. To bring books into the hands of each and every child in the U.K. is going to require some practical magic and action. I'm delighted to have this extra year to bring these plans to life."*

### **Jill Coleman, Director of Children's Books at BookTrust, said:**

*"Anyone who has met Cressida, listened to her talk or read one of her books, will know she is a true force for reading magic. This additional year as Waterstones Children's Laureate will allow us all to do justice to Cressida's boundless creativity, enthusiasm and determination, and create a legacy that will change children's lives."*

### **Michael Morpurgo, who originally created the Children's Laureate role along with Ted Hughes, said:**

*"At this time more than any other I have known we need a Children's Laureate with heart and hope, and we have just who we need in Cressida. I'm so pleased she is happy to extend her time as Laureate. Roar on, Cressida. We need you. Dragons rule!"*

### **Kate Edwards, Chair of the Waterstones Children's Laureate Steering Group, said:**

*"Cressida's energy and passion has resulted in an ambitious agenda, and we are delighted that her tenure as the Waterstone's Children's Laureate will extend for a further year. On behalf of the Steering Group I would like to wholeheartedly thank Cressida and everyone involved in making her Laureateship a success."*

This marks the first time in the twenty-year legacy of the Children's Laureate that the role has been extended beyond two years. Historically, it has been awarded biennially to a leading children's author or illustrator to honour outstanding achievement in their field.

The 'League of Laureates' – including Quentin Blake, Malorie Blackman and Jacqueline Wilson – are the foremost representatives of children's literature, showcasing the extraordinary and dynamic art form and its rich contribution to UK culture.

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### 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 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://booktrust.org.uk)

#### **About Waterstones**

Waterstones is the UK and Ireland's leading high street bookseller with 295 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](http://Waterstones.com) | [@Waterstones](https://www.instagram.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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