

Under strict embargo until 00:01 on Thursday 8th February 2018

John Burningham and Helen Oxenbury win double BookTrust Lifetime Achievement Award



Thursday 8th February - John Burningham and Helen Oxenbury, two iconic children's authors and illustrators have won the first ever double BookTrust Lifetime Achievement Award.

The [BookTrust Lifetime Achievement Award](#) celebrates the body of work of an author or illustrator who has made an outstanding contribution to children's literature. The award was set up in 2015 to recognise an author or illustrator's lifetime of work. The first winner was Shirley Hughes, author of *Dogger* and the Alfie series, Judith Kerr was awarded the accolade in 2016 and *The Snowman* author Raymond Briggs was honoured with the prize in 2017.

John Burningham is famous for books such as *Borka: The Adventures of a Goose with No Feathers*, *Husherybye*, *Avocado Baby* and *Granpa*, which tackles important issues such as bereavement. Helen Oxenbury, meanwhile, is best known for illustrating titles such as *The Three Little Wolves*, *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes* and *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*. The couple, who married in 1964, have won several literary awards individually but have only collaborated on one book together, *There's Going to be a Baby*, published by Walker in 2010.

John said of winning the award: "I'm incredibly grateful to be given an award for a lifetime of work. I'm so very flattered when I hear people now say they love my books and that something I did 50 years ago still works and is enjoyed by their family."

Helen commented "It's particularly lovely as we have been awarded this honour jointly - and to get an award from BookTrust who know everything there is to know about children's books is just wonderful."

The adjudicating panel was made up of six prominent industry figures: current Waterstones Children's Laureate, Lauren Child; author and television presenter Dame Floella Benjamin; writer and illustrator Anthony Browne; poet and playwright Joseph Coelho; CEO of BookTrust, Diana Gerald and chair, writer and critic Nicolette Jones.

Nicolette Jones said: "John Burningham brings a fine artist's skill to children's illustration, with pioneering images that are rich in texture and free with line, appearing in some of the most beautiful, original and memorable picture books of the past 50+ years. Helen Oxenbury is surely one of our finest living draught people, and has been a ground-breaking illustrator throughout her career. Her baby books set a trend, and helped to persuade parents that you are never too young for books. Her images reflected the diversity of our society at a time when few did."

Michael Morpurgo, author and President of BookTrust said: "For hundreds of thousands of children over several decades the first books they ever fell in love with were by one or both of these wondrous storytellers. To turn the pages of their books is to travel into other worlds, to discover and marvel, and to want to return again and again for another visit. To read, to be read, *Oi Get off my Train*, or *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, and so many other iconic books is for so many the beginning of a great adventure, a whole lifetime of reading. In themselves they are works of two great artist/storytellers. They make books you never forget, that you hold in your head and heart. As enjoyable for the grown-up child often reading them out aloud, and the smaller child, listening and looking, lost in words and pictures. How right and proper that they share this honour. Their readers everywhere will be full of hoorays and huzzahs, as I am!"

Diana Gerald, CEO of BookTrust said of the award: "BookTrust is delighted to grant both John and Helen Lifetime Achievement Awards. John always creates such funny and loveable characters. His books evoke such fond memories for me and he has had an extraordinary impact in terms of child development. Helen's illustrations and writing are so warm, so elegant and yet so forward thinking; her work enables children from all walks of life to see their faces in the pages. We have taken the unprecedented decision to honour them both because choosing between two giants of children's books proved near impossible and felt that both their brilliance should be recognised. Acknowledging these two titans of industry is a tremendous honour and they are both so equally deserving."

To celebrate BookTrust's Lifetime Achievement Award there is a special FREE event held at The Southbank Centre as part of the Imagine Festival, honouring John Burningham and Helen Oxenbury's brilliant books. On Thursday 15th February at 11am, well known authors and illustrators such as Chris Riddell, Polly Dunbar, Sophy Henn, David Roberts and David Melling will draw, sign books and share stories with a young audience. [Click here](#) to find out more about the event.

[Ends]

For additional images/interview requests please contact: Sinéad Gosai, BookTrust:
sinead.gosai@booktrust.org.uk | 020 7801 8849 | 07960 949 891

Notes to Editors

Additional quotes

Cressida Cowell "It's wonderful that BookTrust have given us all the opportunity to celebrate the inspiring work of both Helen Oxenbury and John Burningham. As a parent, their books evoke lovely memories of enjoying books together when my children were very young. As an author and illustrator, I have huge respect and admiration for what both Helen and John have achieved. Their work is instantly recognisable, and what I think they have in common is a tremendous warmth of style and reassuring, gentle humour. I love so many of their books that it's tricky to pick out my favourites, but I have a particular fondness for Helen's First Books for Babies series and *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes*, as well as John's *Mr Gumpy* series and *Edwardo the Horriblest Boy in the Whole Wide World*. All these books have an emphasis on helping, empathy, and joy in the everyday that are ever-more relevant messages in a busy world."

Shirley Hughes "Helen Oxenbury is one of the most admired illustrators of her generation; applying her wide-ranging imagination to creating picture books which include the Kate Greenaway Award winning version of Edward Lear's *The Quangle Wangle's Hat*, and her inspired interpretation of Michael Rosen's *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, in which she creates great adventures for the very young by opening up a whole landscape in both colour and black and white line. As an author-illustrator her *Tom and Pippo* series epitomises the kind of books which small children can pore over and enjoy recognising their own experiences of life."

Judith Kerr "I was inspired to become an illustrator by just one book - John Burningham's wonderfully funny and wonderfully drawn *HUMBERT*, the working horse that got to pull the Lord Mayor's coach. More than fifty years later it is still one of the best picture books ever produced for children."

Floella Benjamin "Forty years ago during my time on 'Playschool' I discovered the wonderfully magical talent of Helen Oxenbury. It was always such a delight to read her books and I loved bringing them to life. They had an enchanting way of making every child believe they were part of the story and that the book was created for them".

Anthony Browne "Like Sendak, John Burningham is a picture book maker who can write just as well as he can draw - a rare combination."

Joseph Coelho "Helen Oxenbury's works is at once beautifully distinctive and alive, her characters are those that we see on our streets and I find myself believing that when I close any of her books her characters live on between the pages."

Lauren Child "No one creates a more perfect picture book than John Burningham. His writing is touching, funny and profound, his illustrations are works of art."

“There are many who can draw well but there are few who can draw as elegantly and bring such warmth to her characters as Helen Oxenbury. She is a sublime illustrator, with a gift for drawing worlds one can believe in.”

Michael Rosen “Helen Oxenbury works in the great traditions of line, colour and composition to bring us the emotions of everyday life, often heightened by fantasy. She has reinvented the picture book for the very youngest children, reimagined classic texts, created new ones and - from a personal point of view - turned my adaptation of a folk chant into a great existential quest. It is all a huge achievement. In many different ways, I am more than grateful to Helen for her glorious work.”

Francesca Dow, Managing Director, Penguin Random House Children’s, said: “We couldn’t be more delighted for John and are thrilled to celebrate his glorious career, as his publisher for well over fifty years. *Borka* was John’s very first book with us, launching an extraordinary career – award wins, critical acclaim around the world, and also constant artistic reinvention. John is the original illustration rebel and a thoroughly deserving winner of this honour: he has always put the child reader at the heart of what he does and children everywhere are blessed to have his funny, thought-provoking books to introduce them to a lifelong love of words and pictures.”

Deirdre McDermott, Picture Book Publisher, Walker said: “Walker Books are deeply privileged to have worked with Helen Oxenbury throughout her exceptional picture book career. Helen’s instinctive ability to know what delights little children and the grown-ups that read to them has enabled her to create more than eighty picture books since she was first published by Heinemann in 1967. Her own groundbreaking baby board books and her toddlers’ first experiences series for Walker Books have influenced and shaped the imaginations of so many, many children over the years. It is remarkable to realise that all of Helen’s unparalleled achievements have taken place in the same household where another of the twentieth century’s most iconic picture book makers, her husband John Burningham, has also been writing and painting his own children’s books. In 2010, Walker Books worked with both Helen Oxenbury and John Burningham on their unique collaboration, *There’s Going to Be a Baby*, uniting two peerless masters of picture books together onto the page for the very first time. We congratulate Helen Oxenbury and John Burningham on their astonishing multitude of vivid and amusing picture books, and we look forward to their continued creative vision for many picture books to come.”

About the winners

John Burningham studied illustration and graphic design at the Central School of Art, graduating with distinction in 1959. Many illustration commissions followed including iconic posters for London Transport, before his first children’s book *Borka: The Adventures of a Goose with No Feathers* was published in 1963 and heralded the beginning of an extraordinary career.

He has since written and illustrated over thirty picture books that have been translated and distributed all over the world. These feature his classic and much-loved children’s books like *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, by Ian Fleming, *Mr Gumpy’s Outing* which won his second Kate Greenaway Medal (the first for *Borka*), *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne and *The Shopping Basket*.

Granpa, which published in 1984, won the New York Times Best Illustrated Award and Kurt Maschler Award and was later made into an animated film. John has also published several adult books and in 2010 he collaborated with his wife, fellow illustrator Helen Oxenbury, on *There's Going to be a Baby*.

In 2012 he was nominated for a Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration.

Helen Oxenbury was born in Ipswich and attended the Ipswich School of Art before moving to London to study at the Central School of Art and Design.

Her career has spanned many fields, including design work in theatre, film and television. She started illustrating children's books in 1964 and has published books across age groups, from classic board books for babies to collections of nursery rhymes for all ages.

Oxenbury is a two-time winner and four-time runner up for the Kate Greenaway Medal. She first won in 1969, when the two books cited were *The Quangle Wangle's Hat*, an edition of Edward Lear's 19th-century poem, and *The Dragon of an Ordinary Family*, a new story by Margaret Mahy. She won again in 1999 for her illustrated edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. For the 50th anniversary of the Medal in 2007, Oxenbury's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was named by a panel as one of the top ten winning works of all time.

She has also won two "Emils" the Kurt Maschler Award, the first for *So Much* by Trish Cooke – a book which was also runner up for the Greenaway Medal – and the second for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In 1989, 1991 and 1994 she won three Nestlé Smarties Book Prizes: for *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* as told by Michael Rosen, *Farmer Duck* by Martin Waddell another Greenaway runner up and *So Much*, respectively.

Farmer Duck also claimed the title of Illustrated Children's Book of the Year at the 1991 British Book Awards, while *Tickle, Tickle*, written and illustrated by Oxenbury, won the 1999 BookTrust Early Years Award. In the US, *Big Momma Makes the World* by Phillis Root won the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award.

In 1994, her series about a mischievous child called Tom and his stuffed monkey Pippo was adapted into a French animated series. In 2010 Oxenbury collaborated with her husband, fellow illustrator John Burningham, on *There's Going to be a Baby*.

Her recent publication was with her first-ever collaboration with former Children's Laureate Julia Donaldson, *The Giant Jumperee*.

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

Penguin Random House is the world's number one publisher. We champion authors, shaping and sharing writing that sparks thoughts, dreams, conversations and learning.

We are a vibrant community of publishing houses, representing distinguished publishing histories marked by unparalleled success. We are a home to all kinds of authors. From the best new fiction or picture book writers, to political commentators, trailblazing entrepreneurs, health experts and bold illustrators, we enable talented people from all walks of life to tell their stories – and we make sure they are heard. We sell and license books in over 120 countries, connecting great books with a growing and global audience.

We bring words to life.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.co.uk/>

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/>

Walker Books UK. Home to books for all ages, Walker Books UK publishes many award-winning authors, illustrators and brands including Anthony Horowitz, Cassandra Clare, Lucy Cousins, Anthony Browne, Polly Dunbar, Patrick Ness and Where's Wally? Walker Books UK is part of the vibrant international Walker Books Group that includes Candlewick Press in America, Walker Books Australia, the Walker Group Licencing division, and Walker Productions, developing Walker content for other media platforms, including Hank Zipzer for BBC. The Walker Books Group enjoys a unique ownership structure which includes all of its employees worldwide and more than 150 authors and illustrators. Walker is the world's leading wholly independent publisher of English-language children's books.