**Press release: Embargoed until midday on Tuesday 9 July 2019**

##### **Cressida Cowell Announced as New Waterstones Children’s Laureate**

***‘Books are transformative because of their unique ability to develop three key magical powers: intelligence, creativity and, most important of all, empathy. Words are power; let’s take magic seriously.’ Cressida Cowell, Waterstones Children’s Laureate***

**www.childrenslaureate.org.uk | #ChildrensLaureate**

**Images are available** [**here**](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/g20jck13a3ebc59/AAB5UAuKKkQd75UhPu7Z6xdSa?dl=0)

**Tuesday 9 July, London**: Cressida Cowell, the international bestselling author and illustrator of the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* series and the author of the *Emily Brown* picture books all published by Hachette Children’s Group has today been crowned the Waterstones Children’s Laureate 2019–2021.

Cowell was presented with the iconic silver Laureate medal by the outgoing Waterstones Children’s Laureate, Lauren Child, at a ceremony at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, London.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Waterstones Children’s Laureate, awarded once every two years to an eminent 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.

Managed by [BookTrust](https://www.booktrust.org.uk/), the UK’s largest children’s reading charity, and sponsored by Waterstones, each Laureate brings their own passion to the prestigious role to create a unique legacy. Today, the new Laureate unveiled the **Cressida Cowell Waterstones Children’s Laureate Charter**, a ‘giant to-do list’ to help ensure that books and reading are available to absolutely everyone. The charter asserts that every child has the right to:

1. **Read for the joy of it**
2. **Access NEW books in schools, libraries and bookshops**
3. **Have advice from a trained librarian or bookseller**
4. **Own their OWN book**
5. **See themselves reflected in a book**
6. **Be read aloud to**
7. **Have some choice in what they read**
8. **Be creative for at least 15 minutes a week**
9. **See an author event at least ONCE**
10. **Have a planet to read on**

At the ceremony, Cowell spoke about the importance of school libraries and her plans to campaign for these to be made statutory, and, along with public libraries and librarians, funded properly. Cowell also spoke about helping to develop children’s creative intelligence in the context of the cultural industries and the value they add to the UK economy and beyond, arguing for creative space on the curriculum.

**Cressida Cowell**, Waterstones Children’s Laureate 2019–2021, said:

“Books and reading are Magic and this magic must be available to absolutely everyone. I’m honoured to be chosen to be the eleventh Waterstones Children’s Laureate. I will be a Laureate who fights for books and children’s interests with passion, conviction and action. Practical magic, empathy and creative intelligence, is the plan.”

**Kate Edwards**, Chair of the Waterstones Children’s Laureate Steering Group and Chair of the Waterstones Children’s Laureate 2019–21 Judging Panel, said:

“Nominations for this prestigious role are invited from hundreds of literature, literacy and education organisations across the UK. Cressida Cowell’s impressive canon of work, with broad reach and appeal, coupled with her impassioned advocacy for the right of every child to enjoy a childhood rich in storytelling, cemented our choice for the next Waterstones Children’s Laureate. The Steering Group is looking forward to working with Cressida over the next two years to reach even more children and communities, following on from the wonderful work of the outgoing Laureate, Lauren Child, and the impressive twenty-year legacy of the Laureateship. On behalf of the judges, I extend Cressida our warmest congratulations.”

**Diana Gerald, CEO at BookTrust, said:**

“BookTrust is honoured to manage the Waterstones Children’s Laureate. Cressida Cowell is a superb successor to Lauren Child as she becomes the eleventh Laureate. Cowell is already an extraordinary advocate for children’s reading, and I have no doubt having the Laureate platform will only amplify her voice to help champion children’s reading across the country and help to unlock their creativity.”

**Florentyna Martin**, Children’s Category Manager at Waterstones, said:

“Cressida Cowell is a sparkling ambassador for children’s literature. Her combination of creativity, enthusiasm and determination are solid grounding to launch her new role, which we are delighted to sponsor. Children’s books are at the heart of our bookshops and we’ve thoroughly enjoyed championing Cressida’s stories from the outset, which have become a cornerstone in children’s storytelling. We simply can’t wait to work on Cressida’s Laureateship and help to build the legacy she will undoubtedly create.”

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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 year marks the 20th anniversary of the prestigious role, 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 – and 11th – Waterstones Children’s Laureate is Cressida Cowell. 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 3.4 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 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 diverse authors, illustrators, series and licences 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.

hachettechildrens.co.uk

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**About the ‘League of Laureates’**

**Quentin Blake (1999–2001)**

Best known for his collaborations with some of the leading writers in children’s books, Quentin Blake has an unmistakable drawing style. Promoting illustration was a key focus for Quentin’s time as Laureate. He conceived the idea for the *House of Illustration*, the world’s first centre dedicated to the art of illustration in all its forms. Quentin also selected work for the first Children’s Laureate exhibition, *Tell Me A Picture* (also published as a book), held at the National Gallery in 2001. The exhibition comprised 26 pictures by artists and illustrators, each illustrating a different letter. Quentin also produced *The Laureate’s Party*, an anthology celebrating 50 of his favourite children’s books; *Words and Pictures*, a visual biography exploring the ‘challenges and opportunities of illustration’; and recorded his own experiences in *Laureate’s Progress*, which he called ‘a kind of diary with pictures’.

**Anne Fine (2001–2003)**

Anne Fine writes for both children and adults and her interest in politics and social issues comes across in many of her books. As Children’s Laureate, Anne campaigned to promote the importance of children’s reading and to raise the profile of libraries. She compiled three poetry anthologies (*A Shame to Miss* volumes 1, 2 and 3) and launched the *My Home Library* scheme, encouraging children to build their own libraries at home, for which more than 100 artists and cartoonists provided original bookplate designs. Anne also focused on supporting children with visual impairment, which has since developed into a postal library of Braille picture books called ClearVision.

**Michael Morpurgo (2003–2005)**

Sir Michael Morpurgo is an award-winning writer who has written scores of imaginative and suspenseful books for children. As Children’s Laureate, Michael toured extensively telling his stories to teachers, parents and children to show them that literature comes before literacy, encouraging all children ‘to discover and rediscover the secret pleasure that is reading, and to begin to find their voice in their own writing’.

**Jacqueline Wilson (2005–2007)**

Jacqueline’s sensitive understanding of modern children, the way they live and the problems they encounter, together with her sense of humour, have made her an extremely popular author who continues to make it on to the bestsellers’ lists. During her time as Laureate, Jacqueline worked with BookTrust to promote a love of books and reading amongst children and their carers as well as developing the bestselling book *Great Books to Read Aloud* as part of a campaign to encourage parents, carers and teachers to read aloud to children. Jacqueline also toured extensively, speaking to over 40,000 children and adults all over the UK and Ireland.

**Michael Rosen (2007–2009)**

Michael Rosen is one of the best-known figures in the children’s book world, renowned for his work as a poet, performer, broadcaster and scriptwriter. As Children’s Laureate, Michael created a 20 point plan to make access to books for everyone a priority and a set of policies to put reading books at the heart of the school curriculum. Championing poetry, he created the *Perform a Poem* website for primary schools to encourage pupils to write, choose and perform poems, toured *The A to Z of Poetry* and supported the British Library exhibition on 250 years of poetry for children, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat*.

**Anthony Browne (2009–2011)**

Anthony Browne is an internationally acclaimed author and illustrator of children’s books, blending near-photographic realism with fantastical, surreal touches and ingenious visual puns. As Children’s Laureate, Anthony promoted the importance of picture books and children’s illustration. He was keen to encourage children to be creative and use their imaginations, and to support the development of visual as well as verbal literacy. He went on to create *The Picture Book* project – a collaboration between Seven Stories and Action for Children – and developed the exceptionally fun *Shape Game* for children to play at home or in the classroom.

**Julia Donaldson (2011–2013)**

Julia Donaldson has worked with many different illustrators and written over a hundred books and plays for children and teenagers, in which her love of song and rhyme shines through. While Children’s Laureate, Julia encouraged children to act and read aloud an anthology called *Poems to Perform,* a collection of poems which could be recited by more than one voice, and a series of 60 short classroom plays designed to help children in primary school become more confident and expressive readers. She also used her role to raise the profile of stories for deaf children, as well as championing the invaluable role of libraries in the community through a six-week library tour which took her from the Highlands to Penzance, and spoke to politicians about the damaging impact on children of library closures.

**Malorie Blackman (2013–2015)**

Malorie Blackman is acknowledged as one of today’s most imaginative and convincing writers for young readers, who effortlessly addresses social and racial issues in her books. During her time as Waterstones Children’s Laureate, Malorie championed writing for young people and curated the first ever Young Adult Literature Convention, a groundbreaking project that celebrated its fifth year in 2018. She also ran a nationwide creative writing competition for teens called *Project Remix*, inspired by the growth of online fandom including fanfiction and fan art, and created a book called *Love Hurts* to showcase other YA authors.

**Chris Riddell (2015–2017)**

Chris Riddell is a prolific writer and illustrator whose work is familiar to both children and adults. He is known especially for his distinctive line drawings with their clever caricature, fascinating detail and often enchanting fantasy elements. Chris charted the progress of his Laureateship through daily online drawings on *The Laureate Log*, created visual resources for schools a part of his *Words Need Pictures* project, promoted daily doodling and travelled the length and breadth of the country as ‘The Doodler’, leading live drawing events.

**Lauren Child (2017–2019)**

Lauren Child is a multi award-winning, bestselling writer and artist whose books are known and loved the world over. She is the creator of characters including Clarice Bean, Ruby Redfort and Charlie and Lola. Lauren launched her Laureateship with a campaign encouraging creativity, *Staring into Space*, which inspired children to take a moment out of their day to ‘switch off’ and daydream, allowing ideas space to emerge and play. Lauren has also curated the *Drawing Words* exhibition with the British Council, celebrating 10 illustrators whose work will be toured internationally. The exhibition was inspired by *Magic Pencil*, which was first curated by Quentin Blake.