

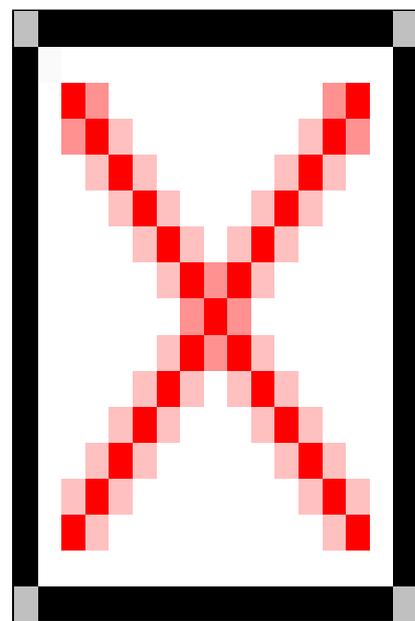


2021 WATERSTONES CHILDREN'S BOOK PRIZE WINNER

By *AndreaMReece*

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Elle McNicoll has been named Overall Winner of the Waterstones Children's Book Prize 2021 for her debut novel *A Kind Of Spark*. Now in its seventeenth year, the Prize consists of £5,000 and the promise of ongoing commitment to the winners' writing and illustrating careers, making it one of the most valuable and prestigious children's book awards in the UK.



Elle McNicoll is a Scottish and Neurodivergent writer, living in London. Elle wrote her debut novel because she grew tired of the lack of inclusivity and representation in children's books. *A Kind Of Spark* was inspired by the history of Scottish witch trials, and the tenacity and fortitude of neurodivergent children. I wanted to write a funny, warm and empowering book for young girls and ND children.

Elle McNicoll says: 'Winning the WCBP21 is completely staggering. I will never say 'I can't' again.

To know that booksellers chose *A Kind Of Spark*, out of an incredible shortlist like this, it is the highlight of my debut. I'm so grateful to Waterstones for their support and I'm proud and extremely emotional to see Addie join past winners.

The story follows 11-year-old Addie as she campaigns for a memorial in memory of the witch trials that took place in her hometown. Confronted with resistance against the memorial and unjust prejudice against herself, Addie must figure out how to make her voice heard. Empathetic and hopeful, it is a tale about friendship, courage and self-belief that powerfully challenges stereotypes.

The Waterstones Children's Book Prize has been championing new and emerging talent in children's writing and illustration for seventeen years and is unique in that it is voted for solely by booksellers.

Rachel, Waterstones Warrington, calls *A Kind Of Spark* important and beautiful and says 'This was my winner from the start. Eye opening, heart-wrenching, sad, inspiring' and Jess, Waterstones Swindon, describes it as 'beautifully written' and 'emotional and heart-warming', while for Elise, Waterstones Bristol Galleries, Addie's story makes you 'laugh and

cry? and is ?a great reminder of the wonderful power of books?.

Florentyna Martin, Waterstones Children?s Buyer, says: ?We have fallen in love with Addie, whose courage and determination are a guiding light, often reminding the world that kindness must prevail wherever we go. Elle McNicoll is undoubtedly an outstanding new talent in children?s books and will inspire readers young and old for generations to come.?

Waterstones offers an exclusive edition of A Kind Of Spark, featuring a beautiful letter by the author to her younger self and the first chapter from Elle?s second book Show Us Who You Are.

The winner of the Younger Readers? category, A Kind Of Spark also secured the accolade of Overall Winner of the Prize, alongside which Darren Charlton?s Wranglestone won the Older Readers? category and The Grumpy Fairies by Bethan Stevens took the category for Illustrated Books.

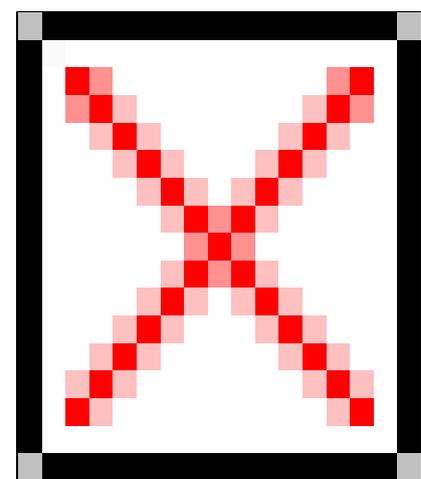
The winner of the category for Older Readers is Wranglestone by Darren Charlton, a love story between two very different boys, merged with a post-apocalyptic zombie thriller. It is a unique novel that is at once tender and tense and has an incredibly atmospheric setting.

Darren Charlton says: ?Because Wranglestone has been chosen by a range of booksellers from across the UK, I hope this win proves that there is a readiness in readers for the LGBTQ+ experience to expand into genres still dominated by their heterosexual counterparts, and this causes publishers to make bolder choices in the books

they decide children and teenagers should read. But ultimately, this is a win for LGBTQ+ teenagers by showing you that your story can be for the many and not just the few. I am so touched and so very grateful that my two boys ever found such an open-hearted tribe to champion them.?

Heidi, Waterstones Manchester Trafford Centre, calls Wranglestone ?Epic, eerie and seriously scary! Utterly brilliant!? and Cassia, Waterstones Covent Garden, praises how ?fresh and original? the book feels, whilst Jess, Waterstones Worcester describes it as ?beautifully written and tender at heart?.

Florentyna Martin comments: ?Darren?s post-apocalyptic narrative balances a cinematic state of impending- doom with unending hope, courage and love. Standing out in its genre for all the right reasons, it?s impossible to put this perfectly-paced and nerve-tingling horror down.?



The Illustrated Books category went to The Grumpy Fairies by Bethan Stevens, an expressively illustrated and hilarious cautionary tale, about a group of young fairies that are very grumpy indeed. After angrily stomping away from their chores, the fairies set out on an adventure in the woods, not knowing that there is a Goblin about, who?s favourite food happens to be grumpy fairies.

Bethan Stevens comments: ?I?m so thrilled that The Grumpy Fairies has won the Waterstones Children?s Book Prize Illustrated Book category, I can?t quite believe it?s true! It has been such a privilege to have been included on the

shortlist with so many other talented authors and illustrators and it means so much to me that more readers will get to enjoy the antics of the grumpy fairies as a result of the award.?

Rhiannon, Waterstones Kensington, calls *The Grumpy Fairies* 'pitch-perfect and extremely entertaining, with eye-catching and beautiful illustrations?' and Harriet, Waterstones Nottingham, describes it as 'such a fun story that will be read over and over again?', whilst Jess, Waterstones Swindon, sums it up as a 'brilliant and clever story ' with 'great illustration style - every child will be able to see themselves in this book?.

Florentyna Martin said: 'Between the fairies' comical expressions and the plot's light-hearted sense of peril, Bethan's marriage of text and illustration crafts an entertaining tale. *The Grumpy Fairies* is a book that children gleefully request on repeat.?'

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