



Some of the winners of the 2019 Northern Writers' Awards

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27 writers share £55,000 award fund at Northern Writers' Awards

The winners have been announced for the Northern Writers' Awards 2019, the annual search for the best new writers in the North of England, produced by New Writing North. The awards took place on 26 June, National Writing Day.

The awards have run since 2000 and are supported by Arts Council England and Northumbria University along with a host of publishing, media and higher education partners including Channel 4, Hachette Children's Group

and the University of Central Lancashire.

The Northern Writers' Awards exist to recognise talent and support new work towards publication or broadcast, with £55,000 worth of awards for writers at different stages of their careers, including mentoring, developmental support and cash awards to buy time to write.

They are the largest writer development programme in England with an enviable track record of success; previous winners include the novelists Benjamin Myers and Yvonne Battle-Felton, children's authors Chloe Daykin and Laura Steven, and poets Andrew McMillan and Zaffar Kunial.

The 2019 judges included the poet Don Paterson; publisher Ellah Wakatama Allfrey; editor Helen Thomas; literary agents Mark Stanton and Jo Unwin; novelists Sita Brahmachari and Carmen Marcus; and journalists Richard Benson and Chitra Ramaswamy.

Ellah Wakatama Allfrey, publishing director at the Indigo Press, and one of the judges of fiction and non-fiction entries, said: 'It was a huge pleasure to read such a wide range of unpublished work from writers of such promise and potential. The winners we have chosen all exhibit ambition and imagination in equal measure, with stories that inspired us. I firmly believe we will be reading published books by these writers before long.'

Richard Benson, journalist and author of *The Valley*, and one of the judges of fiction and non-fiction entries, said: 'The submissions for these awards were as strong and diverse as you might expect. However, what really stood out was the originality of the thinking, and the warmth and inventiveness of new writers rising to the challenge of telling stories that make sense of our challenging, volatile times. It really was a privilege to read them.'

Helen Thomas, editor at Hachette Children's Books and one of the judges of the Hachette Children's Novel Award, said: 'It's been a pleasure to judge the inaugural Hachette Children's Novel Award. The standard of entries was brilliant – they had us gripped, and made us laugh and cry in all the right places. It was a real treat to read work by so many different writers.'

With close to 1600 entrants, 2019 was the most competitive year yet for the programme.

There are several new awards in 2019, including the Hachette Children's Novel Award, which was awarded to James Harris from Middlesbrough. James wins an advance of £5000 as part of a publishing contract with Hachette Children's Books.

James Harris said: 'I am beyond delighted to have won the Hachette Children's Novel Award. It's honestly hard to put my feelings into words, which is a shame as I'm supposed to be a writer now. It's basically a dream come true. I've had a couple of weeks to try to get used to the idea, and I haven't: it's still astonishing and unbelievable. Thank you!'

Another new award is the NorthBound Book Award, which is sponsored by University of Central Lancashire, and which was awarded to Juliana Mensah from Gateshead. Juliana wins £5000 plus publication with Saraband.

Juliana Mensah said: 'I'm thrilled to have won the NorthBound Book Award. It's both an exciting and a daunting prospect to think that something I've worked on for so long, in what was quite a solitary process, will make its way out into the world. I'm grateful to have the work recognised in this way and looking forward to working with Saraband.'

Sara Hunt, publisher at Saraband said: 'I'm absolutely delighted to be working with Juliana to publish her wonderful novel – and for the first winner of this award to be such a stellar talent. *Castles from Cobwebs* is a powerful, imaginative exploration of identity and belonging that is absorbing, beautifully written, sometimes magical, and a thoroughly deserving winner.'

Also new to the awards this year is the Sid Chaplin Award, which is supported by the family of Sid Chaplin, the North Literary Agency and Newcastle University. The award was open to working-class writers and has been awarded to Lyndsey Skinner from Newcastle to support the completion of her first novel, *Snowflake*, which explores what it means to be a working-class millennial.

Lyndsey Skinner said: 'Winning the Sid Chaplin Award has been a huge and timely boost to my confidence in myself as a writer. I'm truly honoured to have won the first award in Chaplin's name and for this amazing opportunity to contribute to the vibrant and vital dialogue around what it means to be a working-class writer in 2019.'

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North, said: 'It is with great excitement that we announce the winners of this year's Northern Writers' Awards. The awards have a really impressive track record of finding and supporting brilliant new writers and helping them go on to great things, so we know that we will see some of the work awarded tonight on our bookshelves, on the prize lists and even on our television screens in the years to come. These are the ones to watch.

As ever, we are grateful to all the partners who contribute to making the Northern Writers' Awards such a successful programme. This year we have welcomed several new partners into the programme, including two publishers, Hachette Children's Books and Saraband. It has been fantastic to see the very fruitful way that publishers – both big and small – and the literature sector can work together to discover, develop and ultimately publish new writers.'

Katy Shaw, Professor of Contemporary Writings at Northumbria University, said: 'Northumbria University is delighted to be the headline sponsor for the 2019 Northern Writers' Awards. New Writing North and Northumbria University work together through our partnership to enhance teaching, research and knowledge exchange within the North and nationally. Staff and students contribute to the Northern Writers' Awards and Northumbria has worked with New Writing North to generate new research into the impact of the Northern Writers' Awards this year. A report based on our research ([The Value of Writing](#)) identified the Northern Writers' Awards as a sustainable model of best practice in supporting writers from a diversity of backgrounds and establishing a talent pipeline from the North to the London-based publishing industry. The report was recently presented to a parliamentary select committee hearing on class barriers in the UK publishing industry. We look forward to continuing our partnership success in our new five year agreement.'

[The list of 2019 winners in full is:](#)

Northern Writers' Awards for Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction

Tara Guha

Northern Writers' Awards for Poetry

Rommi Smith

Sam Buchan-Watts

Penny Boxall

Hachette Children's Novel Award

James Harris

NorthBound Book Award

Juliana Mensah

New North Poets programme

Penny Newell

Freya Jackson

Charlotte Wetton

Sarah Wimbush

Northern Debut Awards

Catharine Johnson

Jane Bradley

Leigh Goodall

TLC Free Reads Scheme

Eirinie Lapidaki

Shaun Wilson

Julie Noble

The Sid Chaplin Award

Winner: Lyndsey Skinner

Highly Commended: Christopher Fallow

Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award

Allison Adkins

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards – Bonafide Films

Adam Bennett-Lea

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards – Lime Pictures

Joshua Halm

Word Factory Apprentice Award

Melissa Wan

Andrea Badenoch Fiction Award

Sarah Corbett

Arvon Award

Sarah Dunnakey

Young Northern Writer Award

Winner: Ciah White

Highly Commended: Lauren Hollingsworth-Smith

Matthew Hale Award

Matthew Schofield

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