

NEW WRITING NORTH

Press release

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Northern Writers' Awards 2023: Twenty-five writers to watch from the North of England

Twenty-five writers from the North of England received awards worth more than £50,000 at the Northern Writers' Awards on Tuesday (20 June) evening, as the awards programme held its annual flagship celebration at Northumbria University.

The Northern Writers' Awards were founded by New Writing North in 2000 and exist to recognise talent and support new work towards publication or broadcast. Now in their 24th year, the awards are the largest writing development programme of their kind in England.

Each year, the awards identify some of the best unpublished writing in the country, attracting the attention of literary agents and publishers for whom the incredible track record of the awards marks a stamp of approval. In 2023 alone, more than a dozen books have been published by previous Northern Writers' Awards winners, including *A Dark Inheritance* by HF Askwith (Penguin); *Cuddy* by Benjamin Myers (Bloomsbury); *Lily Grim and The City of Undone* by Andy Ruffell (Hodder); *Dear Neighbour* by Jane Claire Bradley (Sphere); *The Ink Cloud Reader* by Kit Fan (Carcenet); and *The Summer She Vanished* by Jessica Irena Smith (Headline).

The Northern Writers' Awards are produced by New Writing North with support from Northumbria University and Arts Council England.

Awards offered in this round are supported by partners including Hachette Children's Group, Newcastle University, The North Literary Agency, the writer Benjamin Myers and the families and friends of Sid Chaplin and Matthew Hale.

Several of the awards are enhanced by partnerships with the Literary Consultancy, the Society of Authors, Out-Spoken Press and Oneworld. New for 2023, winners of Northern Debut Awards will also receive a group Writing Weekend at Lockhaugh Farm in Derwent Valley.

Since 2023, the Northern Writers' Awards have moved to staggered, year-round submission windows due to growth in the programme, meaning that even more awards with partners including Channel 4, Arvon, Rollem Productions, Lime Pictures, Bonafide Films, and the Word Factory will be announced later in the year.

The Northern Writers' Awards offer a wide range of support and opportunities

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for writers at all stages of their careers, including mentoring, manuscript assessment, writing placements, retreats and cash awards to buy time to write.

The winners of Northern Writers' Awards 2023 are:

Northern Writers' Award for Fiction

Alison Armstrong
Emma Morgan

Northern Writers' Awards for Poetry

Holly Hopkins
Liam Bates

Hachette Children's Novel Awards

Rachel Pattinson
Rachel Rowlands

Northern Debut Award for Fiction

Anton Rose

Northern Debut Award for Memoir

Yvonne Reddick

Northern Debut Award for Young Adult Fiction

Bridget Helen Hamilton

Northern Debut Awards for Poetry

Carson Wolfe

Northern Debut Award for Poetry: Out-Spoken Press Programme

Alex Mephram
Jane Thomas

Northern Promise TLC Awards

Letty Butler
Farzana A Ghani
Katja L Kaine

Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award

Helen Parker

Sid Chaplin Award

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Dr Louise Marie Powell (Winner)
Candi Martin (Highly commended)

Finchale Award for Short Fiction

Sarah Davy

Young Northern Writers' Awards

Fadi Alali (Fezzy) (Winner, 11-14)
Abby Wilson (Highly commended, 11-14)
Isabel Johnson (Winner, 15-18)
Joe Wright (Highly commended, 15-18)

Matthew Hale Award

Robert Hall (Winner)
Hanna Elkaram (Highly commended)

Will Mackie, Senior Programme Manager (Talent Development) & Programme Leader (MA in Publishing), New Writing North, said: 'The Northern Writers' Awards continue to throw a spotlight on some of the most fresh and inspiring new writing being produced anywhere in the UK. We're excited and fortunate to be able to support this year's winners and are looking forward to working with them as they continue to develop their work in progress. None of this would be possible without the long-term commitment of our partners at Northumbria University, our funders Arts Council England and the many dedicated awards partners, sponsors, donors and friends who work with us across our ever-growing portfolio of opportunities.'

Neil Percival, Acting Director of Cultural Partnerships, Northumbria University, said: 'The Awards exemplify everything that our growing partnership with New Writing North sets out to achieve – unlocking the talent and potential of outstanding Northern writers of all ages and backgrounds. We're proud to host the Awards, to congratulate all the recipients, and to shout about the talent in our region.'

Hilary Murray Hill, Chief Executive Officer, Hachette Children's Group, said: 'Working with New Writing North is always a joyful moment in our publishing calendar – the judging process is collaborative, illuminating and rewarding, and working with our eventual winners is no less of a pleasure. Keen, informed, energetic and supportive they always embrace the whole experience with gusto, and there's always excellent local support to help bolster that. It always feels like a positive process for all involved.'

Caroline Bird, judge for poetry awards, said: 'I was unusually struck by the standard of the entries in both categories; it made the job of choosing winners both enjoyable

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and torturous! That said, I couldn't be more proud of the winners. The three debut collections by Carson Wolfe, Alex Mephram and Jane Thomas each feel expertly cut from their own sort of rare, sentient stone; and the poems pull you into the page and cast you out, changed. The two Northern Writers' Award winners, Liam Bates and Holly Hopkins, have already published excellent collections and also this new work feels truly new, taking risks both formally and emotionally, as if both poets are physically striving to light up uncharted areas in their hearts and brains. I can't wait to see all of these books on shelves and all their books yet to come.'

Sairish Hussain, judge for Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction awards, said: 'It's been such an honour to judge this year's Northern Writers' Award for Fiction. The submissions were truly impressive, with a breadth of stories being told in the most creative and skillful ways. My fellow judge and I had wonderful conversations about the writing – as well as some tough decisions to make! I know that this year's winners will continue to inspire and ignite conversations about new Northern talent.'

Ross Raisin, judge for Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction awards, said: 'The winning entries for this year were exactly what we had hoped to find: stylistically accomplished; intellectually, politically, playfully engaged with the minutiae of worlds that surprised and delighted us. There is something unshowily confident, new, in this writing, which was a pleasure to read.'

Winners' comments (find a full list of winners' quotes and bios [here](#))

For the first time in 2023, there are two Hachette Children's Novel Awards winners, each winning £3000 and receiving a nine-month programme of mentoring with professionals at Hachette Children's Group and a children's publishing agent.

Rachel Pattinson, from County Durham, said: 'I am absolutely delighted to be a winner of the Hachette Children's Novel Award - this is my first longer novel for children and I loved writing it. For me, this recognition is an amazing encouragement, and the mentoring support from Hachette Children's Group and New Writing North will be invaluable in helping me to develop and improve my writing.'

Rachel Rowlands, from Sheffield, said: 'I am very excited to have won the Hachette Children's Novel Award. Having worked hard to develop my middle-grade novel over several years, it is wonderful to receive recognition and the opportunity of mentoring to help it become the best it can be.'

Dr Louise Powell, from Middlesbrough, won the Sid Chaplin Award, worth £2000, for her novel *Underdogs*. Louise said: 'I've been walking around in a daze since I found out that I won the Sid Chaplin Award for my novel, which I've been working on

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for four and a half years. As a working-class writer who grew up below the poverty line, I have to battle against impostor syndrome, a lack of confidence, and being told that my writing “doesn’t count”. I’m deeply grateful to be awarded the support I need to complete my novel, and submit it to agents and independent publishers.’

Manchester poet Carson Wolfe was one of three winners of the Northern Debut Awards for Poetry to work on their debut poetry collection. **Carson said:** ‘Winning the Northern Writers’ Award is a dream come true for me as a poet. This recognition validates my work and further provides the financial support and mentorship I need to continue writing/publishing my poetry. I am so grateful for this opportunity, and I am excited to see how my manuscript will develop over the next twelve months.’

Liam Bates is a poet living in Morecambe, and winner of a Northern Writers’ Award for Poetry. **Liam said:** ‘When the message that I’d won eventually sunk in, I literally punched the air; it was very out of character. This just to say that the award will have a huge impact on what I’m doing. The financial and self-esteem boosts are going to make writing and honing new work much easier, and for someone who’s not always the best mingler, to be welcomed so ardently into this network... the worth of that will be immeasurable. I want to thank the Northern Writers’ Awards and this year’s judge, Caroline Bird, for believing in what I’m doing.’

Farzana A Ghani, from Leeds, is a former high school English teacher and a current a PhD candidate in English Literature with Creative Writing at the University of York. Farzana won a Northern Promise TLC Award to support work on her novel. **Farzana said:** ‘I am honoured and delighted to win this award. It will give me access to resources and expertise needed to research and write to the end of my novel. It is heartening to have recognition for something that, for so long, will remain in my head and on my computer. Knowing that my work is worth reading has given me the impetus to continue what is a long-term, mammoth project.’

Find out more about all of the 2023 winners at www.northernwritersawards.com

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For all media enquiries, please contact Laura Fraine laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com
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Find a full list of winners’ quotes and bios [here](#). Photos are also available – please contact Laura Fraine .

Titles published in 2023 by previous award winners include:

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H.F. Askwith, *A Dark Inheritance* (Penguin, January 23)
Benjamin Myers, *Cuddy* (Bloomsbury, March 23)
Pip Fallow, *Dragged Up Proppa* (Macmillan, March 23)
Kit Fan, *The Ink Cloud Reader* (Carcenet, April 23)
Andy Ruffell, *Lily Grim and The City of Undone* (Hodder, May 23)
Mari Hannah, *Black Fell* (Orion, June 23)
Jane Claire Bradley, *Dear Neighbour* (Sphere, June 23)
Naomi Kelsey, *The Burnings* (HarperNorth, June 23)
Hannah Durkan, *Zeina Starborn and the Emerald King* (Orion, July 23)
Polly Atkin, *Some of Us Just Fall: On Nature and Not Getting Better* (Sceptre, July 23)
Jessica Irena Smith, *The Summer She Vanished* (Headline, August 23)
Julia Rampen, *The Bay* (Saraband, August 23)

THE NORTHERN WRITERS' AWARDS AVAILABLE FOR 2023 ARE:

- **Northern Writers' Awards**
Cash prizes of up to £5000 to support writers of fiction, narrative non-fiction, YA, graphic novels, short stories and poetry.
- **Northern Debut Awards**
Structured developmental support to writers of fiction, young adult fiction, narrative non-fiction or poetry who are yet to publish a full-length work. The package of support includes a £2000 bursary, mentoring and a group Writing Weekend at Lockhaugh Farm in Derwent Valley. One of the poetry awardees will be admitted onto the Out-Spoken Press Emerging Poets Development Scheme, an initiative to nurture and support poets, and will receive mentoring from Anthony Anaxagorou.
- **Hachette Children's Novel Awards**
The Hachette Children's Novel Award is open to debut writers of middle-grade children's fiction and early teen fiction. The winners receive £3000 and a nine-month mentoring programme with Hachette Children's Group and a children's publishing agent.
- **Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award**
Worth £2000, for a single standalone piece of fiction, narrative non-fiction or poetry, or an extract of a longer work, is open to final-year students and recent graduates of Northumbria University in any discipline.
- **Sid Chaplin Award**
In partnership with Newcastle University and the North Literary Agency, supports writers of fiction and narrative non-fiction who identify as

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originating from a working-class background. The winning writer will receive a bursary of £2000 and a comprehensive package of support. The award is supported by the Chaplin family, in memory of Sid Chaplin (1916–1986) whose novels include *The Day of the Sardine* and *The Watchers and the Watched*.

- **The Finchale Award for Short Fiction**
Awards a short story writer a prize of £1000. This award is made possible by the generosity of writer Benjamin Myers.
- **Matthew Hale Award**
Open to young writers aged 11-18 who show promise but have had limited opportunities to pursue their talent. This award is funded by the Hale family and consists of a package of support created by New Writing North, worth £500.
- **Young Northern Writers' Awards**
Recognises one young writer aged 11-14 and one aged 15-18 whose work shows exceptional promise. Each writer will be awarded £150. Up to two writers may also be highly commended across the age categories.

About the partners

About New Writing North

New Writing North is the development agency for creative writing and reading in the North of England. Based in Newcastle upon Tyne since 1996, it is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

The organisation works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the Northern Writers' Awards, Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize, Durham Book Festival and the David Cohen Prize for Literature.

New Writing North specialises in developing and investing in writers of all ages and act as a dynamic broker between writers, producers, publishers and broadcasters across the creative industries. Current partners include BBC Radio 3, Channel 4 Drama, Faber and Faber, Hachette Children's Group, Northumbria University and Durham University. In 2023, it launched a Writing and Publishing Skills Hub with support from North of Tyne Combined Authority.

As a producer of new work, New Writing North commissions a wide range of writing from topical essays and publications to award-winning dance theatre productions, short films, live literature and broadcast projects.

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New Writing North's extensive and award-winning Young Writers programme develops the creativity and skills of young people. Work in schools with children and their teachers is complemented by a large and diverse out-of-school programme that is open to all, with a special focus on areas with fewer opportunities.

As a promoter and producer of festivals and literary events and through its partnerships with schools, libraries, universities and prisons, New Writing North engages audiences with enriching and creative reading experiences.

The Northern Writers' Awards are its central platform for discovering and developing new writers from across the region, and were founded in 2000. More information about the Northern Writers' Awards is available at www.northernwritersawards.com.

About Northumbria University

Northumbria University, Newcastle is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

One of the largest institutions in the UK with almost 37,000 students from 176 countries and almost 227,000 alumni worldwide, Northumbria is empowering a new generation of innovators, visionaries and change-makers to transform lives, to make a remarkable impact on the world, and to take on tomorrow.

Northumbria has invested almost £300 million in its estate since 2005 to improve the student experience.

Northumbria is ranked 23rd in the UK for research power and had the biggest rise in research power ranking of any UK university in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF2021).

Northumbria's cultural partners include New Writing North, Live Theatre, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Tyneside Cinema, and Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums.

Northumbria is the Times Higher Education Awards University of the Year 2022.

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,

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Orchard Books, Orion Children's Books, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, Quercus Children's Books, Laurence King Children's Books, Pat-a-Cake, Welbeck Children's Books, Wren & Rook, Franklin Watts and Wayland Books.

The Group publishes a wide range of authors, illustrators, series and licences including: Alice Oseman, Cressida Cowell, Jim Field, Onjali Q. Raúf, Tim Peake, Rachel Bright, Dean Atta, Kiran Millwood Hargrave, Marion Deuchars, Nina Chakrabarti, Adiba Jaigirdar, Alex Wheatle, Alexandra Bracken, Rosie Jones, Benjamin Zephaniah, J.K. Rowling, Sinead Burke, Jacqueline Wilson, Juno Dawson, Leigh Bardugo, Annabel Karmel, Matthew Syed, Skye McKenna, David Almond, L. D. Lapinski, Lauren Child, Dermot O'Leary, Francesca Simon, Alex T. Smith, Zanib Mian, Giles Andreae, Guy Parker-Rees, Piers Torday, Robert Ingpen, Rainbow Magic, Beast Quest, Kes Gray, Gabby's Dollhouse and Jurassic World.

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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