



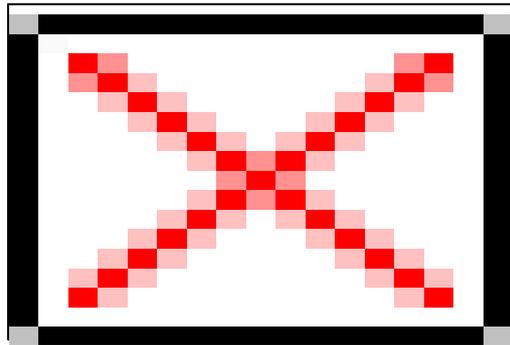
It?s Wicked!

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Byline:

Celebrating a brilliant creative writing competition

Celebrating ten years of **The Wicked Young Writer Awards**

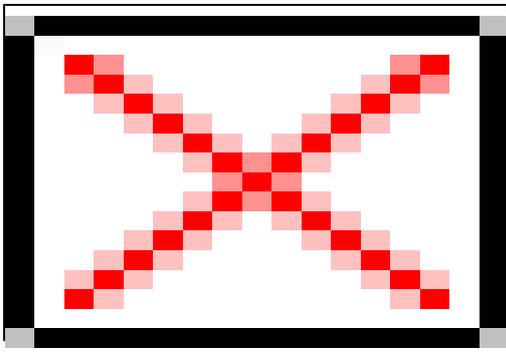


It was ten years ago this year that **The Wicked Young Writer Awards** were founded, the original idea of Michael McCabe, Executive Producer of **Wicked the Musical**. **Wicked**, the musical phenomenon, opened on Broadway in 2003 and has been running in the West End for 13 years. **Wicked** had started a successful education programme and wanted to add a writing element to this. They initially felt that they would like to focus on the genre of **Wicked** - a prequel or re-imagining of a familiar story, drawing inspiration from the original book of the musical, **Wicked** by Gregory Maguire.

But Michael Morpurgo persuaded the team at **Wicked** that it would be better to have a broader theme, allowing young people to write about what really excited them - whether poetry or prose - free to find inspiration and an original voice.

Morpurgo it was too who decided that it would be wonderful to have the award in different age-categories right up to 25. It was an ambitious format, but the idea took hold. He also suggested that the shortlisted and finalist writing be published in a special anthology each year. He drew inspiration from the WH Smith Book Award, founded by his friend Ted Hughes, which had encouraged young writers, many of whom went on to become professional authors, actors, playwrights and poets. The annual anthology is one of the highlights of the Awards, always a race to proof in time, but a true celebration of young people?s writing. The Awards have always encouraged original voice and thought, the judges looking for these qualities rather than perfect grammar and spelling. As Michael Morpurgo says, ?I was delighted to get involved all those years ago because I felt there was a great need for a writing award for all ages. One that wasn?t prescriptive but would allow young people to write about what they felt, to find their voice with the encouragement of their parents and teachers.?

Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall has been the Patron of the Awards since they were founded. The awards are partnered with the **National Literacy Trust** and fundraise for **NLT**. The Duchess is a passionate promoter of Literacy in the UK and internationally, with a particular focus on encouraging a love of reading and writing from an early age and is also Patron of several organisations which promote and support literacy, including **Book Trust**, **First Story** and **Beanstalk**. There was a memorable moment when the Duchess was leaving the Apollo Victoria after the Awards were presented, coincidentally the same day as the announcement of the engagement of Prince William and Kate Middleton. When she was asked by the press on the steps of the theatre for her thoughts on the engagement, she replied, ?It?s Wicked!?

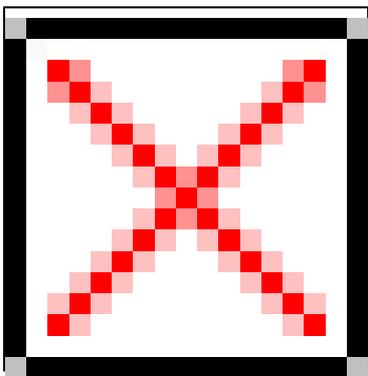


Over the years, there have been some incredible judges including Ed Balls, Cressida Cowell, Laura Dockrill, Inua Ellams, Caleb Femi, poet Hussain Manawer, Nicky Cox from **First News** newspaper and Jonathan Douglas, CEO of NLT. Jonathan Douglas says, "Over the past 10 years, young writers from across the UK have been capturing our imaginations, moving us to tears and making us laugh out loud through the **Wicked Young Writer Awards**. Writing can inspire children and young people's creativity and give them the freedom to explore their thoughts and feelings. Not only that, children and young people who enjoy writing tend to go on to do better at school and lead happier lives. I can't wait to read the entries from this year's young writers as we celebrate 10 years of this incredible award."

Since they were set up, the Awards have attracted entries from over 50,000 children and young people across the UK, with several former winners going on to be published poets and writers. Another unique facet of the Awards is the presentation ceremony at the Apollo Victoria, London home of *Wicked the Musical*. All 120 finalists and their families and teachers are invited. The ceremony features live performances and readings of the winning entries by the *Wicked* cast. For many of the young people, it is an incredible moment when they hear one of the stars of the show reading their piece of writing.

The judges for the 2020 Awards will be: Cressida Cowell, the new Waterstones Children's Laureate, returning as Head Judge for a fifth consecutive year. Cressida will be joined again by long-standing judges Jonathan Douglas, Chief Executive of the **National Literacy Trust**; Nicky Cox MBE, Editor-in-Chief of the award-winning children's newspaper **First News**; Michael McCabe, Executive Producer (UK) of **WICKED** and the internationally renowned poet and mental health ambassador Hussain Manawer, who returns for a second year. Joining them for the 10th anniversary year will be the **BAFTA** award-winning writer, comedian and actor Charlie Higson and author, illustrator and performance poet Laura Dockrill.

Wicked has an Ambassador in Dan Freedman, author of the **Jamie Johnson** football book series and most recently, **Unstoppable**, who has visited schools across the country to raise awareness of the Awards.



The Awards will be presented in June this year, as in previous years, entrants can enter one of five different age categories; 5-7, 8-10, 11-14, 15-17, 18-25. In addition, the 2020 Awards see the fifth year of the FOR GOOD Award for Non-Fiction, encouraging 11-25-year olds to write essays or articles that recognise the positive impact that people can have on each other, their communities and the world we live in. Pieces of original writing can be submitted, either individually or as part of a school group, until 2 March 2020.

The overall winners from each category will win a VIP family experience to the West End production of **WICKED**,

including an exclusive backstage tour and cast meet-and-greet, £50 book/eBook tokens, plus £100 worth of books for the 5-14-year old winner's school library, donated by Hachette Children's Books. All finalists' entries get printed in the **Wicked Young Writer Awards 2020** anthology.

There will also be prizes for [the school and teacher who submit the most entries](#) [2]. The Awards are pleased to announce as returning media partner for 2020, First News. First News will also sponsor the Award prize for the FOR GOOD category which is judged by the by Editor-in-Chief Nicky Cox MBE.

The deadline for entries is 2 March 2020.

Schools, writing groups or individuals can enter for the 10th year of the [Wicked Young Writers Awards](#) [2] and there are also writing tips and resources from the Award judges.

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Links:

[1] <http://t.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/239>

[2] <http://www.WickedYoungWriterAwards.com>