

2025 WILBUR SMITH ADVENTURE WRITING PRIZE

A YEAR IN REVIEW

"Seeing all the amazing work that the Foundation is doing - so inspiring and heartening - and, of course, winning the prize are experiences I will cherish forever."

Costanza Casati, Author





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January 2025
Submissions open for Best
Published Novel and New Voices
awards



March 2025
Submissions open for Author of
Tomorrow award



April 2025
Our team of volunteer librarians
and library staff gathered to
determine the published listings



May 2025
Best Published Novel longlist of
twelve adventure books announced



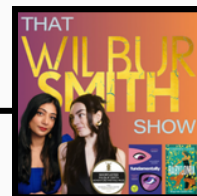
June 2025
Best Published Novel shortlist of
six adventure books announced



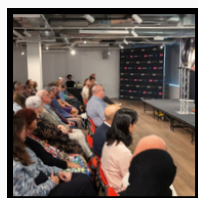
July 2025
Author of Tomorrow shortlist and
commendations announced



August 2025
A summer of interviews, book club
meetings and podcast recordings
with the authors on the shortlist



September 2025
The winners revealed at the Wilbur
Smith Adventure Writing Prize
awards reception, in London



AUTHOR OF TOMORROW AWARD

AN ADVENTURE FOR EVERYONE
READ. SHARE. RECOMMEND.

The Author of Tomorrow is for the adventure writers of the future. It is open to young people across the world who have completed a short piece of adventure writing in English.

Prizes are awarded in three categories:

11 & Under - Prize: £100 & £150 book token

12-15 years - Prize: £250 & £150 book token

16-21 years - Prize: £1,000

Where the entries came from...



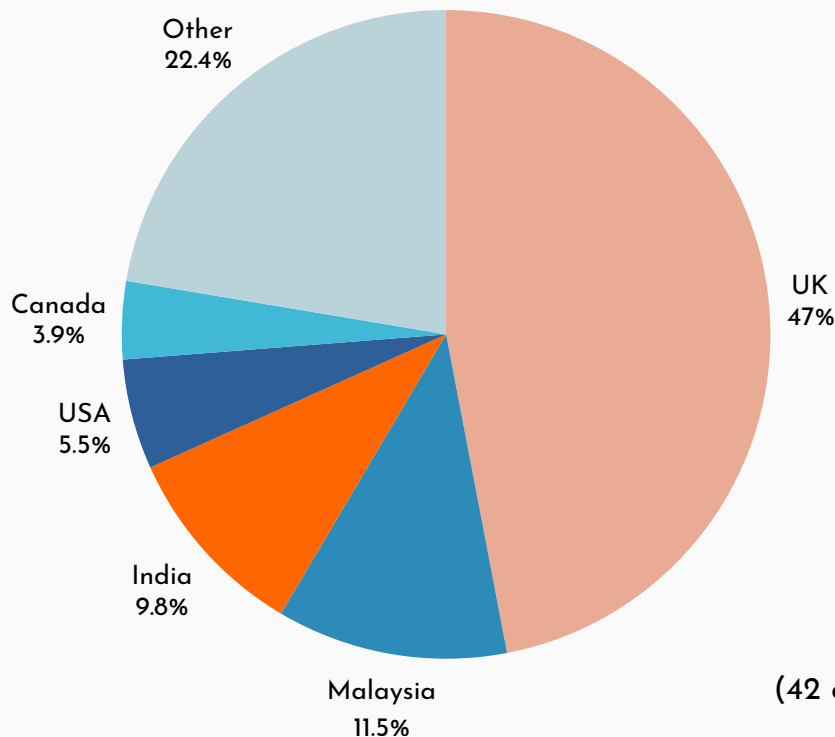
747 Stories



47 Countries



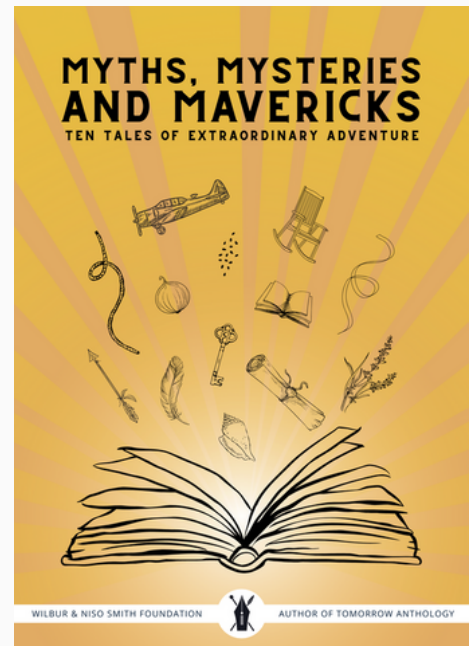
905K Words



UK: 351
Malaysia: 86
India: 73
USA: 41
Canada: 29
Remaining: 167
(42 other countries)

The ten shortlisted authors worked with an editor before their stories were published in the anthology *Myths, Mysteries & Mavericks*, on Booksmart, the app and online library run by global literacy charity, Worldreader.

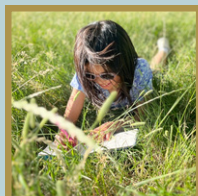
An additional 90 young writers received bespoke editorial feedback on their work. To read the anthology, scan the QR code or visit the Booksmart website.



11 & Under



Sharvil Jadav
The Raindrop



Mei Lau
Deep Dive



Eleanor Lodewijks
Complicated Farewells, Unspoken Goodbyes

12-15 Years



Oluwatumininu Akinwande
Sun-Born

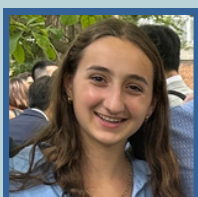


Hanako Hiroma d'Aronville
Peace is Nine Worlds Away

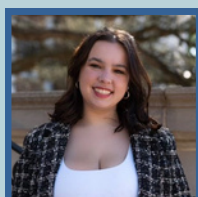


Amena Dato
The Newfound Voice

16-21 Years



Eliana Abrams
The Smuggler's Apprentice



Madeline Arcaro
Salt in Her Lungs



Abbie Englund
The Dividing Line



Isabelle Mugford
The Island of Echoes

NEW VOICES AWARD

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The New Voices supports writers to develop an idea they've yet to commit to paper, or those in the very early stages of their work-in-progress.

The Award provides mentorship and editorial guidance for aspiring authors and encourages entries from all writers, including those from underrepresented backgrounds with a new story to tell.

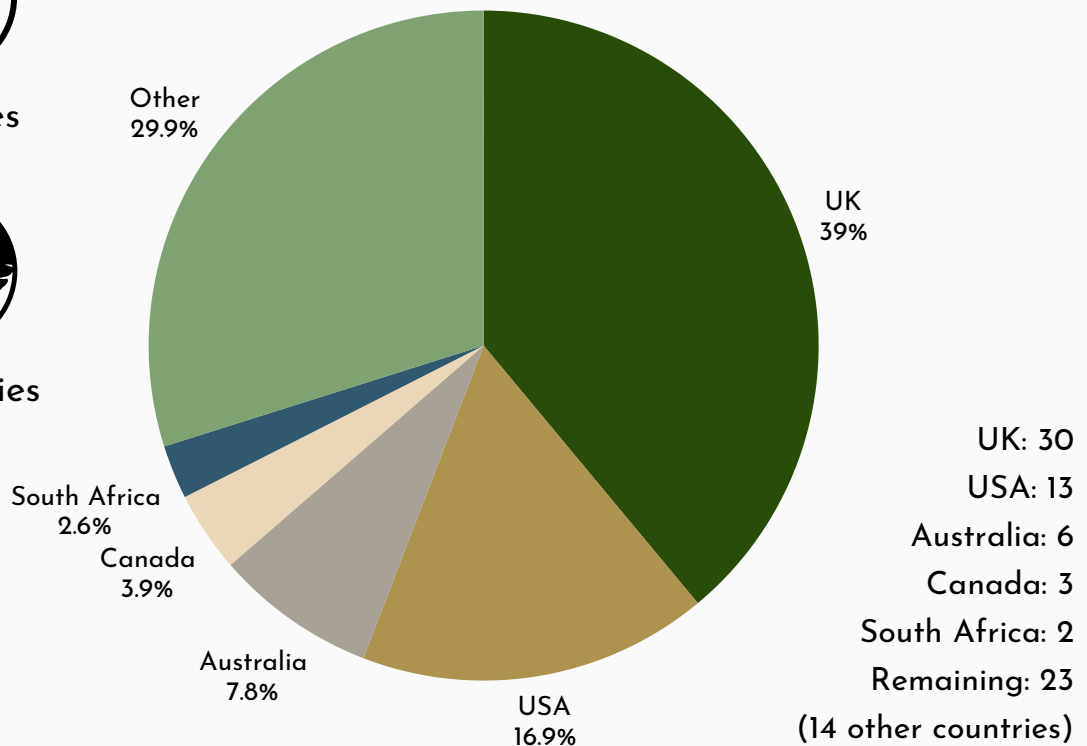


77 Stories



19 Countries

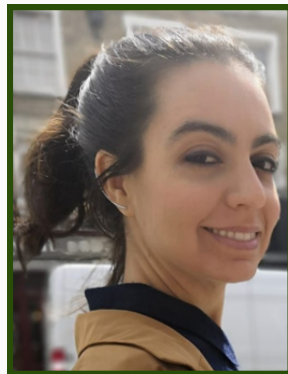
Where the entries came from...



2025-26 Incoming Class



"I am so excited to be part of the New Voices cohort for this year and can't wait to begin the programme!"



2024-25 Outgoing Class

The New Voices supported five writers over 2024-25 to take their novels from idea to full first draft. The writers, from Australia, the UK, Ireland and the USA received one-to-one mentoring and editorial guidance.

They are all now seeking, or working towards seeking, literary agent representation.



BEST PUBLISHED NOVEL

AN ADVENTURE FOR EVERYONE
READ. SHARE. RECOMMEND.

The Best Published Novel celebrates the best adventure stories of the last year. Novels are submitted by publishers and literary agents with entries accepted by authors of any nationality, writing in English.

In September, under guidance from our expert judging panel of literary and adventure professionals, the title of Best Published Novel was presented to Costanza Casati for *Babylonia*.

Where the entries came from...

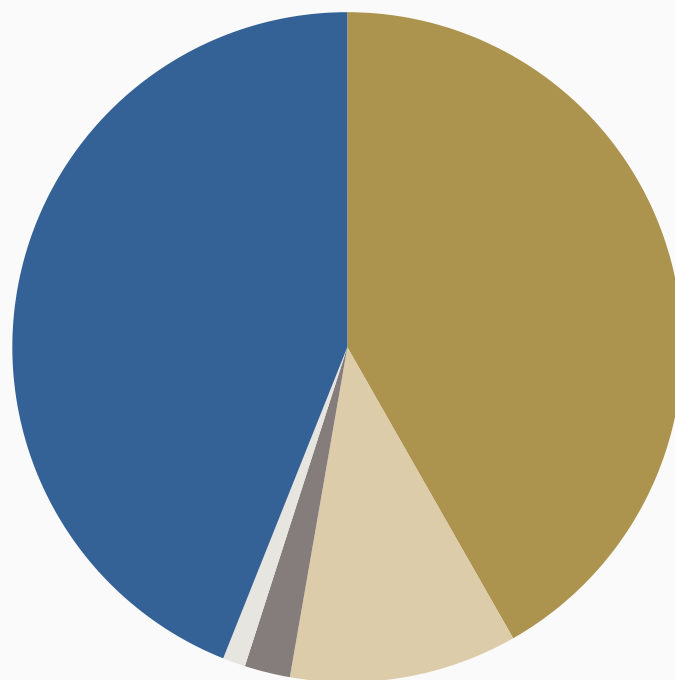


95 Stories



8 Countries

Other
44%



Australia
2.2%

USA
11%

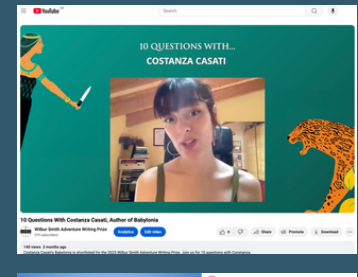
UK
41.8%

UK: 38
USA: 10
Australia: 2
Canada, France,
Singapore, South
Africa & Taiwan: 1
each
Remaining: 40
(location undeclared)

Our team of volunteer librarians and library staff led the charge, selecting the long and shortlists, and sharing the news in their communities across the UK.

We created a suite of bespoke marketing materials for each title.

Prize partners Write On! Magazine and Pen to Print Audio provided a platform for our shortlisted authors to share their wisdom and promote their books.



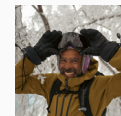
● Costanza Casati On Her Novel, 'Babylonia': A Write On! Audio Listener Contribution
 Pen to Print - Podcasts for Aspiring Writers
 Thank you for listening to Write On! Audio, the podcast for writers everywhere brought to you by Pen To Print. Our listener...



Our judging panel along with a widely publicised reader's vote, selected *Babylonia*, Costanza Casati's feat of rich historical imagination as 2025's winner.



Nathan Gray
 Former high-risk test & military pilot



Keme Nzerem
 Journalist & filmmaker



Francesca de Tores
 Author & 2024 Prize winner



Corinne Turner
 Literary IP Consultant

THE READING AGENCY

Supported by The Reading Agency we took the shortlist to libraries and reading groups across the UK.

Physical and digital packs of posters, stickers and bookmarks, plus social media assets, interviews and discussion sheets were shared, including a welsh translation.



Twelve book clubs shadowed the judging process, reading and reviewing their assigned title before having the opportunity to meet 'their' author for a private Q&A.



"Being part of the Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize has been such a rewarding experience for our book club. It gave us the chance to step outside our usual reading choices and discover new voices and perspectives."



Five Books - Expert Book Recommendations
@five_books

NEW: Fighter pilot Nathan Gray talks us through the six brilliant books shortlisted for this year's Wilbur Smith Prize for Adventure Writing (@Wilbur_Niso_Fdn):

Nathan Gray recommends
The Best Adventure Novels: The 2025 Wilbur Smith Prize

From fivebooks.com

Calendula Libraries
@CMCGLibraries

The winner of the 2025 #AdventureWritingPrize is *Babylonia* by @costanzacasati! You can borrow or reserve this incredible historical adventure novel from your nearest @CalendulaLibraries. Autumn is here so time to get comfy with a good book @readagency @wilbur_niso_fdn

2:00 pm · 14 Sep 2025 · 176 Views

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Costanza Casati wins 2025 Wilbur Smith prize for *Babylonia*

News · Prizes Friday, 12th September 2025

'Great adventure novel' set in 9th-century BC Assyria awarded £10,000 Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize

Linda Hill @Lindahill50HILL · 18 Aug

The most amazing set of shortlisted @Wilbur_Niso_Fdn #AdventureWritingPrizeBooks has arrived! What a fantastic selection to #ReadShareRecommend by @costanzacasati @NydiaMadeWords @JackJordanBooks @dmccauley @samanthasotto @Nussalbah

Thank you so much for sending them to me 🙏

2 5 19 561

Eric Karl Anderson @lonesomeader · 5 Sep

I've now read all the novels shortlisted for the 2025 Wilbur Smith #AdventureWritingPrize - watch me rank the books and predict which I think will win: [youtube.com/watch?v=D6xTiu...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6xTiu...)

You 2 260

The Reading Agency
@readingagency

The winner of the Wilbur Smith #AdventureWritingPrize is *Babylonia* by @costanzacasati

Set in 9th-century BC Assyria, *Babylonia* follows Semiramis, an orphan who rises from obscurity to claim the ancient throne, navigating love, war and betrayal.

bit.ly/46gK9QZ

12:50 pm · 12 Sep 2025 · 539 Views

Curating Adventure: The Wilbur Smith Prize 2025 at Foyles

Foyles, Charing Cross Road, London. Host of the 2025 Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize, with this year's shortlisted novels on display.

Wilbur Smith wrote adventure at scale: empires, deserts, dynasties, survival. Since his death in 2021, the Wilbur & Niso Smith Foundation has kept that legacy alive through the Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize, a project that doesn't just honour his name, but actively curates new voices in global adventure writing.

Singaporean wins international writing prize for work in progress

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28 Sep 2025 · Show More

Singaporean Sarah Ang's novel-in-progress *White Song* has won the New Voices Award at the 2025 Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize. Her story follows a high-flying Singaporean strategy consultant on a whole research expedition after ending a toxic relationship.

The 29-year-old, who says her win was "humbled and deeply affirming", tells *The Straits Times*: "Wilbur Smith was one of my dad's favourite authors when he was a boy. Writing and publishing a novel has been a childhood dream of mine for as long as I can remember. Since I could pick up a pen, I've been scribbling stories on my own."

The prize is given to an unpublished writer from around the world. The London-based Wilbur and Niso Smith Foundation, which organises the prize, states on its website that the prize is judged "based on the strength of the idea, writing style, characterisation and — that magic ingredient — 'readability'" and is aimed at unearthing "fresh literary talent".

As part of the prize, Ang will receive mentorship and editorial guidance from editor Martin Fletcher. He has worked on the novels of the late British-South African novelist Smith since 2015, and co-wrote Smith's autobiography *On Leopold Road* (2018). This year-long mentorship will help Ang develop her novel into a full-length draft.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SARAH ANG

Job-South African novelist Smith since 2015, and co-wrote Smith's autobiography *On Leopold Road* (2018). This year-long mentorship will help Ang develop her novel into a full-length draft.

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Diana McCauley triumphs with 'A House For Miss Pauline'
Book shortlisted for Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize

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Published: Sunday | June 15, 2025 | 12:10 AM | Yacine News - Sunday Cleaner writer

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The heroine of Diana McCauley's *A House For Miss Pauline* is 99-year-old Pauline Evadne Sinclair, who is quite a chatter, to say the least. Hailing from the district of Mason Hall, Miss Pauline is not charming with the traditional "nice little old lady" vibe, but rather, she is part rascal, part sage, with guts, grit, spunk, and yes, even a few curse words when she deems it necessary.

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COSTANZA CASATI WINS £10,000 WILBUR SMITH ADVENTURE WRITING PRIZE FOR 'MESMERISING MODERN EPIC', BABYLONIA.

16 SEPTEMBER 2025

The 2025 shortlist for the Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize for Best Published Novel was announced June 4, 2025. Titles and authors of genre interest include:

- Babylonia**, Costanza Casati (Penguin Michael Joseph)
- White Song**, Sarah Ang (Penguin Michael Joseph)
- A House for Miss Pauline**, Diana McCauley (Penguin Michael Joseph)
- Wings**, Samanthasotto (Simon & Schuster)
- Reckoning**, Nydia Made Words (Penguin Michael Joseph)

Opening in spring from June 15 to August 31, the winner of the £10,000 prize will be announced in the fall of an awards ceremony in London.

For more information, including the full shortlist, see the [Wilbur & Niso 2025 Prizes website](https://www.wilburandniso.com/awards).

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Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize Shortlist

The 2025 shortlist for the Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize for Best Published Novel was announced June 4, 2025. Titles and authors of genre interest include:

- Babylonia**, Costanza Casati (Penguin Michael Joseph)
- White Song**, Sarah Ang (Penguin Michael Joseph)
- A House for Miss Pauline**, Diana McCauley (Penguin Michael Joseph)
- Wings**, Samanthasotto (Simon & Schuster)
- Reckoning**, Nydia Made Words (Penguin Michael Joseph)

Opening in spring from June 15 to August 31, the winner of the £10,000 prize will be announced in the fall of an awards ceremony in London.

For more information, including the full shortlist, see the [Wilbur & Niso 2025 Prizes website](https://www.wilburandniso.com/awards).

The Prize's community, newsletter subscribers and social media followers amplified the conversation around each of the books on the shortlist, helping to reach new readers.

Thank you to the press outlets, reviewers, bloggers and vloggers who shared photos, book reviews and videos around the Prize this year.



Congratulations

On Thursday 11th September, we were thrilled to host the 2025 Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize Awards Reception. With bubbles in hand, authors, agents, publishers, readers, judges, volunteers and friends gathered at Foyles, Charing Cross Road, to discover the winners of each award.

2025's Winners

Best Published Novel:
Babylonia by Costanza Casati

New Voices:

Sarah Ang, Oliver Tobias Bugg, Bidisha Chakraborty, Marcella Marx and Sam McManus

Authors of Tomorrow:

Mei Lau (11 & Under), Amena Dattoo (12-15 Years), Abbie Englund (16-21 Years), Madeline Arcaro (Highly Commended)



"Being shortlisted for the prize has been the absolute highlight of my year. What an honour and thrill, truly. It's been wonderful to meet everyone and to play a small part in the work you do. The awards evening was magical and I really loved being a part of it. Talking to some of the young writers, just starting to make their own story adventures, supported by the foundation, was very inspiring and moving."

"I would like to say a huge thank you for the hard work and generosity of those involved in running the Author of Tomorrow prize. It was such a wonderful experience, from writing my story to meeting lots of interesting people at the ceremony, and it was an amazing surprise to win! It really means a lot to me."



The Prize is awarded annually by The Wilbur & Niso Smith Foundation, a registered charity established in 2015 by the late adventure author Wilbur Smith and his wife, Niso.

The Foundation empowers writers, promotes literacy and advances adventure writing as a genre, working to uplift, inspire and educate.

We work with writers and readers of all ages and stages across the world, to ensure everyone can have their own adventures through the words on a page.

THANK YOU

We rely on the generous support of individuals, sponsors, partners and volunteers, and would like to thank each of you who has supported our cause.

If you believe in our mission and would like to share the journey, you can make a donation by scanning the QR code. If you would like to volunteer your time, or are a writer looking for opportunities, please visit our website or email us for further details.



e: team@wilbur-niso-smithfoundation.org

w: www.wilbur-niso-smithfoundation.org

The Wilbur & Niso Smith Foundation is a registered charity, number 1161513