

## YA Book Prize 2023

Explore some of the shortlisted books from the YA Book Prize 2023!



**Level:**S3-S6/ Third and Fourth Levels and Senior Phase

*Note to teachers: These books contain some material that may not be suitable for some students. We recommend that teachers read the books carefully before using it in the classroom or recommending it to students and/or seek parental guidance.*

### **The Eternal Return of Clara Hart by Louise Finch**

In *The Eternal Return of Clara Hart* Spence is forced to replay the same day over and over again, each time desperately trying to save Clara.

Think of a day when something horrible happened to you (it doesn't have to be as horrible as what happens to Spence! It could be fighting with a friend, failing a test, getting embarrassed at school.) Do you think you could have done anything to have changed what happened.

- Quickly write down what happened that day.
- Think of one thing that you could have done differently or which could have happened to change the outcome. Write a short piece of writing describing what could have happened.

- Repeat the exercise with different things which could have happened differently and imagining the outcome.
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### **The Society for Soulless Girls by Laura Steven**

In *The Society for Soulless Girls* Alice struggles to control her anger, until she finds an ancient spell which offers respite from her hot temper.

Discuss:

- Do you ever struggle to control your emotions? Maybe you too struggle with anger, or maybe you often feel overexcited, or really shy in some situations. If this is the case how does that make you feel, and do you have any methods of coping with your strong emotions.

Exercise: Freewriting

- Write a short paragraph describing a time when you've felt overcome with an emotion. But don't plan your writing, just start writing and try to imagine yourself in that moment, writing down what happens and how you feel. Don't stop writing until your piece is finished. Do you feel it accurately represents how you felt?
- Imagine that you discovered a spell which allowed you to control this emotion. How would that feel? Write another freewriting piece describing how you feel when you're free of that emotion and never need to feel it again.

### **If You Still Recognise Me by Cynthia So**

*"Love is something which happens silently. When Dad takes my empty bowl and refills it with rice without me having to ask for more; when Mum cooks my favourite dish, beef with sha sha sauce, and keeps picking up pieces of beef with her chopsticks and dropping them in my bowl even when I insist I've had enough; when Mum plays Dad's favourite classical music tracks to wake him up on Sunday mornings so that the whole house fills with orchestral swells, gentle and vibrant at once, and brings him breakfast in bed; when Dad brings home a box of mum's favourite cookies, gooey and warm with half-melted chocolate.*

*So much of what I understand of love in my family seems to revolve around food."*

For Elsie relationships, including friendships, family relationships and love are often associated with food and eating.

Think about or discuss:

- Are there certain people in your life who you associate with certain foods or meals? Why? How does it make you feel when you think about or eat that food, what does it remind you of?
- Write a short piece of text describing eating the food. What does it make you think of any why? How do you feel when you eat that food?

### **Twin Crowns by Catherine Doyle**

- Read the first chapter of each of the two sisters' POV.
- How shaped by their environments do you think the sisters are?
- Do you think you would behave differently if you were raised somewhere completely different?
- Write the opening of a story from the POV of your own long-lost twin- what characteristics do you have in common? How have they been influenced by their home environment?

### **The Cats We Meet Along the Way by Nadia Mikail**

In *The Cats We Meet Along The Way* Aisha and her family go on a roadtrip to do some of the things which are most important to them before the end of world.

Discuss:

- Who or what do you consider to be most important to you?
- If you could visit any place one more time, where would it be and why?
- If you had the opportunity to see or visit anybody one more time, who would it be and why?
- If you had to pack your bags to potentially leave your house forever, what would you take and why? Are the items practical or emotional?

### **Kemosha of the Caribbean by Alex Wheatle**

Discuss:

- Kemosha and the other black characters speak in a Jamaican-English dialect. How does this technique of verbal characterisation change the book for you? How different would the book be if it was written in the style of standard UK English?
- Kemosha often mentions her mother's faith in old Gods of nature whose names you might not have been familiar with before reading. Research these online to find out more about the religion and work out where in Africa Kemosha's ancestors were from.
- A major underlying theme of the book is the varied and rich cultures within the non-Western world. How are these represented and what does they achieve in giving you a historical understanding of the setting of 17th century Port Royal and the British colonies?

### **When Our World Collided by Danielle Jawando**

In *When Our Worlds Collided* each of the main characters deals with people making assumptions about them or their peers based on where they live, the school they go to or the colour of their skin.

Choose one of the examples below and write a report of the situation from the point of view of the the two different parties.

- Write an account of Shaq's death and the events leading up to it from the point of view of both the local newspaper, and one of the characters who stopped to help Shaq.
- Write the police report of Jackson's assault and then Jackson's statement of what happened.
- Write the teachers' report of Chantelle's essay, then the dialogue between Chantelle and her gran where she explains what happened.
- Write a description of the Marc's graffiti from the point of view of a resident, and then write a review of it in a local arts magazine (You have some decisions to make here – what do they each think?)

OR choose another example from the book.

### **Her Dark Wings by Melinda Salisbury**

Discuss:

- As this book is a reimagining of the myth of Persephone, using a modern setting to interpret its themes differently. Read up on the original Greek myth, then what parallels can you see in the extract of Melinda Salisbury's book?
- Modern adaptations of myths are very popular, and many you might not even notice are based on myths. Can you identify some films, books or even songs that use myth as a foundation? Once you have some, what have they changed about the myths, and how does this change the message?
- What myth that you know would make an interesting modern adaptation? Discuss in groups and try to come up with a simple narrative with a beginning, middle and end for one.

### **The Songs You've Never Heard by Becky Jerams & Ellie Wyatt**

Discuss:

- The book deals with the strain within families exposed to fame, and how even very young people can become famous via social media. Do you think the characters are portrayed realistically? Is the conflict something you can understand if you were in that position?

- Gen-Z have a unique level of cultural and social access because of their connection online in media-focused spaces. If the conflict of the book was set in the 80s, before the internet, how would it change? Would it even be possible?
- Meg McCarthy often feels forgotten or unappreciated because of the attention focused on her brother. Throughout the book she grows to develop her own sense of individuality through music and her relationships. Identify how you express your individuality – is that something that fits with your personality, or maybe it's something you find interesting that changes the way you act or feel?

## **Your Turn**

### **The Awards Ceremony!**

Why not stage your own YA Book Awards Prizegiving Ceremony!

- Allocate a different person to present each shortlisted book, why they liked it and why they think they should win. They could include a short reading from the book.
- Either have a judging panel – or allow each person to vote anonymously for their favourite book.
- Whoever wins should make a speech – don't forget your thank yous!
- Make it fun – why not dress up, have some fizzy juice or snacks, or even a selfie wall!

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## **Further Questions**

Lastly, do you have any questions you would like to ask any of the shortlisted authors if you got the chance? Try to think of at least two and make a note of them.

Keep your eye out for more awesome books from the shortlisted authors, as well as the other authors from the Edinburgh International Book Festival!



*Actual Investors*