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National Book Foundation

THE 2015 NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALISTS ANNOUNCED EXCLUSIVELY ON NPR'S *MORNING EDITION*

*Winners in Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry,
and Young People's Literature to be announced at the
66th National Book Awards
on November 18, 2015.*

New York, NY (October 14, 2015, 9:20 a.m.) – For a second consecutive year, the five Finalists in each National Book Award Category: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Young People's Literature were announced on NPR's *Morning Edition*. NPR's David Greene, Barrie Hardymon, and Glen Weldon announced the five Finalists at 8:22 a.m. EDT in each National Book Award category.

The selection of Finalists follows last month's announcement of the National Book Award Longlists of ten books in each of the Awards' four categories. The Longlists and Finalists were each chosen by a panel of five writers and literary experts. Of the twenty Finalists, only two—poet Terrance Hayes and Young People's author Steve Sheinkin—have ever been NBA Finalists before.

The **Fiction** Finalist list includes Karen E. Bender, Angela Flournoy, Lauren Groff, Adam Johnson, and Hanya Yanagihara. Karen Bender's collection of short stories focuses on money and family; Angela Flournoy's debut novel is a family history set in Detroit, Michigan as it deteriorates through the decades; Lauren Groff's novel follows the ups and downs of a married couple; Pulitzer Prize Winner Adam Johnson's short stories one of which won the *Sunday Times* short story prize see the world

through scrimps of death and dying; Hanya Yanagihara's novel follows four men from college through middle age. Yanagihara's *A Little Life* was shortlisted for the 2015 Man Booker Prize.

The **Nonfiction** list includes Ta-Nehisi Coates' powerful indictment of racial politics in America, written in a form of a letter to his son; Sy Montgomery's fascinating "immersion" in the world of octopi; Carla Power's chronicle of conversations that she, a secular-oriented American, engaged in with a madrasa-trained sheikh, which confronts persistent misconceptions; and memoirs by two artists, Sally Mann's life and work as a photographer, and poet and Pulitzer Prize Winner Tracy K. Smith's coming-of-age.

Among this year's **Poetry** Finalists are four first-timers. Ross Gay apotheosizes daily life, with such poems as "Spoon," and "Feet". Ada Limón focuses on place, relationships, and the formation of personal identity. Patrick Phillips' elegiac volume is a son's lament for his father. Robin Coste Lewis' first collection of verse interweaves language with various ecologies of verse, embedding her content in varied lines and typefaces. Winner of the 2010 National Book Award in Poetry, Terrance Hayes returns to the NBA with a collection of powerful language and investigation of verse forms.

The **Young People's Literature** list includes Steve Sheinkin, a Finalist for the National Book Award in 2012 and 2014. Among this year's first-time Finalists are Ali Benjamin for *The Thing about Jellyfish*, her debut novel; Laura Ruby, who writes for children, young adults, and adults; Neal Shusterman, whose prior work has been an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and a Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Readers; and Noelle Stevenson, a cartoonist, for *Nimona*, her first solo work. Stevenson is 23 years old.

2015 National Book Award Finalists

Finalists for Fiction

Karen E. Bender, *Refund*, published by Counterpoint Press

Angela Flournoy, *The Turner House*, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Lauren Groff, *Fates and Furies*, published by Riverhead Books/Penguin Random House

Adam Johnson, *Fortune Smiles*, published by Random House

Hanya Yanagihara, *A Little Life*, published by Doubleday/Penguin Random House

Finalists for Nonfiction

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, published by Spiegel & Grau/Penguin Random House

Sally Mann, *Hold Still*, published by Little, Brown, a division of Hachette Book Group

Sy Montgomery, *The Soul of an Octopus*, published by Atria Books, a division of Simon & Schuster

Carla Power, *If the Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship and a Journey to the Heart of the Quran*, published by Henry Holt and Company, a division of Macmillan

Tracy K. Smith, *Ordinary Light*, published by Alfred A. Knopf

Finalists for Poetry

Ross Gay, *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press

Terrance Hayes, *How to Be Drawn*, published by Penguin

Robin Coste Lewis, *Voyage of the Sable Venus*, published by Alfred A. Knopf

Ada Limón, *Bright Dead Things*, published by Milkweed Editions

Patrick Phillips, *Elegy for a Broken Machine*, published by Alfred A. Knopf

Finalists for Young People's Literature

Ali Benjamin, *The Thing About Jellyfish*, published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

Laura Ruby, *Bone Gap*, published by Balzer + Bray, a division of HarperCollins Children's Books

Steve Sheinkin, *Most Dangerous: Daniel Ellsberg and the Secret History of the Vietnam War*, published by Roaring Brook Press

Neal Shusterman, *Challenger Deep*, published by HarperCollins Children's Books

Noelle Stevenson, *Nimona*, published by HarperTeen/HarperCollins Children's Books

Please see Finalists' bios at the bottom of the release.

For summaries of the Finalists books (www.nationalbook.org/index.html), and then click on the author's name.

The Winners will be announced on Wednesday, November 18 at the 66th National Book Awards Benefit Dinner and Ceremony at Cipriani Wall Street in New York City, which will be streamed live on the Foundation's website, www.nationalbook.org. Winners receive \$10,000 and a bronze statue; Finalists receive \$1,000 and a bronze medal. The Benefit is chaired by Morgan Entrekin, Deborah Needleman, Lynn Nesbit, and Shelley Wanger. Jennifer Egan will present the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters to Don DeLillo. Carmen Fariña, New York City School Commissioner, will present the Foundation's Literarian Award for Outstanding Contribution to the American Literary Community to James Patterson. Andy Borowitz, will emcee the event.

Publishers submitted a total of 1,428 books for this year's National Book Awards: 419 in Fiction, 494 in Nonfiction, 221 in Poetry, and 294 in Young People's Literature. Judges' decisions are made independent of the National Book Foundation staff and Board of Directors; deliberations are strictly confidential. To be eligible for a 2015 National Book Award, a book must have been published in the United States between December 1, 2014 and November 30, 2015, and must have been written by a United States citizen.

The invitation-only Awards Ceremony is the culminating event of National Book Awards Week. The celebration begins on November 16 with **5 Under 35**, the Foundation's invitation-only celebration of emerging fiction writers selected by National Book Award Winners and Finalists. On the morning of November 17, the **National Book Awards Teen Press Conference** will take place at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Jacqueline Woodson, the 2014 National Book Award Winner for Young People's Literature, will host the event at which invited students will have the opportunity to interview the five Finalists for the National Book Award in Young People's Literature. On the evening of November 17, all Finalists will read from their nominated works at the **National Book Awards Finalists Reading** at The New School. The Finalists Reading is open to the public: tickets are \$10 and are available on-line through The New School Box Office.

Biographies

Fiction biographies

Karen E. Bender is the author of the novels *A Town of Empty Rooms* and *Like Normal People*. Her fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, *Zoetrope*, *Ploughshares*, *Story*, *The Harvard Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Guenica*, and other magazines. Her stories have been anthologized in *Best American Short Stories* and *Best American Mystery Stories*, and have won two Pushcart prizes. She lives in North Carolina with her husband, novelist Robert Anthony Siegel, and their two children.

Angela Flournoy is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the University of Southern California. She has taught writing at various universities and has worked for the D.C. Public Library. She was raised in Southern California by a mother from Los Angeles and a father from Detroit. *The Turner House* is her first novel.

Lauren Groff is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of two novels, *The Monsters of Templeton* and *Arcadia*, as well as the celebrated short-story collection *Delicate Edible Birds*. Her work has appeared in a number of magazines, including *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, and *The Atlantic*, and in several of the annual *The Best American Short Stories* anthologies. Groff's fiction has won the Paul Bowles Prize for Fiction, the Medici Book Club Prize, the PEN/O. Henry Award, and the Pushcart Prize, and has been shortlisted for the Orange Prize for New Writers and a finalist for the *L.A. Times* Book Prize.

Adam Johnson is the author of *Emporium*, *Parasites Like Us*, and *The Orphan Master's Son*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. He has received a Whiting Award and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation. His work has appeared in *Esquire*, *Harper's*, *Playboy*, *GQ*, *Paris Review*, *Granta*, *Tin House*, *The New York Times* and *Best American Short Stories*. He teaches creative writing at Stanford University and lives in San Francisco.

Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* is on the shortlist for the 2015 Man Booker Prize. Her previous novel, *The People in the Trees*, is based on the real-life story of Daniel Gajdusek, who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. She lives in New York City.

Nonfiction biographies

Ta-Nehisi Coates is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and the author of the memoir *The Beautiful Struggle*. Coates has received the National Magazine Award, the Hillman Prize for Opinion and Analysis Journalism, and the George Polk Award for the *Atlantic* cover story "The Case for Reparations."

Sally Mann is one of America's most renowned photographers. She has received numerous awards, including National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Guggenheim Foundation grants, and her work is held by major institutions internationally. Her many books include *Second Sight* (1983), *At Twelve* (1988), *Immediate Family* (1992), *Still Time* (1994), *What Remains* (2003), *Deep South* (2005), *Proud Flesh* (2009), and *The Flesh and the Spirit* (2010). A feature film about her work, *What Remains*, debuted to critical acclaim in 2006. She lives in Virginia. sallymann.com

Sy Montgomery is a naturalist, documentary scriptwriter, and author of twenty acclaimed books of nonfiction for adults and children, including the memoir *The Good Good Pig*, a *New York Times* bestseller. The recipient of numerous honors, including lifetime achievement awards from the Humane Society and the New England Booksellers Association, she lives in New Hampshire. symontgomery.com

Carla Power writes for *Time* magazine and is a former correspondent for *Newsweek*, where she produced award-winning stories, reporting from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Her essays have appeared in *Vogue* and *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *Foreign Policy*, and others. Her work has been recognized with an Overseas Press Club award, a Women in Media Award, and the National Women's Political Caucus's EMMA award. She lives in England. carlapower.com

Tracy K. Smith is the author of three books of poetry: *The Body's Question* was the winner of the 2002 Cave Canem Poetry Prize; *Duende* won the 2006 James Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets and an Essence Literary Award; and *Life on Mars* won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize and was selected as a *New York Times* Notable Book. Smith was the recipient of a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award in 2004 and a Whiting Award in 2005. In 2014, the Academy of American Poets awarded Smith with the Academy Fellowship, presented each year to recognize distinguished poetic achievement. In 2012, she served as a Judge for the National Book Awards in Poetry. Smith is the director of the creative writing program at Princeton University.

Poetry biographies

Ross Gay is the author of two previous poetry collections, *Against Which* and *Bringing the Shovel Down*. His poems have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Orion*, *the Sun*, and elsewhere. His honors include a Cave Canem Workshop fellowship and a Bread Loaf Writers Conference Tuition Scholar. He is an associate professor of poetry at Indiana University and teaches in Drew University's low-residency MFA program in poetry. rossgay.net

Terrance Hayes is the author of *Lighthouse*, winner of the 2010 National Book Award and finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; *Wind in a Box*; *Hip Logic*; and *Muscular Music*, winner of the Kate Tufts Discovery Award. His honors include a Whiting Award, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a United States Artists Zell Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a MacArthur Fellowship. Hayes was guest editor of *The Best American Poetry 2014*. He teaches at the University of Pittsburgh. terrancehayes.com

Robin Coste Lewis is a Provost's Fellow in Poetry and Visual Studies at the University of Southern California. She is also a Cave Canem fellow and a fellow of the Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities. A finalist for the Rita Dove Poetry Award, she has published her work in various journals and anthologies, including *The Massachusetts Review*, *Callaloo*, *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review*, *Transition: Women in Literary Arts*, *VIDA*, *Phantom Limb*, and *Lambda Literary Review*, among others. She has been awarded residencies and fellowships by the Caldera Foundation, the Ragdale Foundation, the Headlands Center for the Arts, the Can Serrat International Art Centre in Barcelona, and the Summer Literary Seminars in Kenya. *Voyage of the Sable Venus* is her first collection of poetry.

Ada Limón is the author of three previous collections of poetry: *lucky wreck*, *This Big Fake World*, and *Sharks in the Rivers*. Her poems have appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and *American Poetry Review*, among other publications. She has contributed essays and articles to a variety of publications, such as *Oxford American*, *Guernica*, *Poetry*, and *American Poetry Society*. She has received fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, and the Kentucky Foundation for Women. She was a Judge for the 2013 National Book Award in Poetry. She serves on the faculty of Queens University of Charlotte Low Residency MFA program (Latin American & Charlotte) and the 24PearlStreet Online Program for the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center. She lives in Lexington, Kentucky. adalimon.com

Patrick Phillips is the author of two earlier collections of poetry, *Boy* and *Chattahoochee*, which won the 2005 Kate Tufts Discovery Award; and translator of *When We Leave Each Other: Selected Poems of Henrik Nordbrandt*, which received the 2008 Translation Prize of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. His honors include both Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, the Lyric Poetry Award from the Poetry Society of America, and a Discovery/*The Nation* Prize from

the 92nd Street Y. His work has appeared in many magazines, including *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Nation*. He teaches at Drew University and lives in Brooklyn, New York. patrickthemighty.com

Young People's Literature biographies

Ali Benjamin is the co-author of Tim Howard's best-selling memoir *The Keeper* and, with Paige Rawl, *Positive*, which was a Junior Library Guild selection and the first nonfiction selection for *The Today Show* book club; and *The Cleaner Plate Club*. *The Thing about Jellyfish* is her debut novel. alibenjamin.com

Laura Ruby writes fiction for children, young adults, and adults. Her children's book *Lily's Ghosts* was nominated for the Edgar Award and her young adult novel *Good Girls* was an ALA Quick Pick for teens. She is on the faculty of Hamline University's Masters in Writing for Children Program. She makes her home in the Chicago area. lauraruby.com

Steve Sheinkin is the author of several books on American history for young adults including *BOMB: The Race to Build—and Steal—the World's Most Dangerous Weapon*, which was a Finalist for the National Book Award, awarded a Newbery Honor, and won the Sibert Medal, the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults; and *The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights*, which was a Finalist for the National Book Award and winner of the Boston Globe/Horn Book Award for nonfiction. He lives in Saratoga Springs, New York. stevesheinkin.com

Neal Shusterman is the author of many novels for young adults, including *Unwind*, which was an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and a Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Readers, *Everlost*, and *Downsiders*, which was nominated for twelve state reading awards. He also writes screenplays for motion pictures and television shows such as *Animorphs* and *Goosebumps*. He lives in southern California. www.storyman.com

Noelle Stevenson's *Nimona* was a *New York Times* bestseller, and is her first solo work. She was nominated for a Harvey Award and was awarded the *Slate* Cartoonist Studio Prize for Best Web Comic in 2012 for *Nimona*. A graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art, She is a writer on Disney's *Wander Over Yonder*; the co-writer for *Lumberjanes*, which won an Eisner Award for "Best New Series" and "Best Publication for Teens (Age 13-17);" and has written for Marvel and DC Comics. She lives in Los Angeles. www.gingerhaze.com

Brief biographies of this year's National Book Award Judges are available at http://www.nationalbook.org/nba2015_judges.html

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The National Book Foundation's mission is to celebrate the best of American literature, to expand its audience, and to enhance the cultural value of good writing in America.

The National Book Award is one of the nation's most prestigious literary prizes and has a stellar record of identifying and rewarding quality writing. In 1950, William Carlos Williams was the first Winner in Poetry, the following year William Faulkner was honored in Fiction, and so on through the years. Many previous Winners of a National Book Award are now firmly established in the canon of

American literature, such as Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, Jonathan Franzen, Denis Johnson, Phil Klay, James McBride, Joyce Carol Oates, Adrienne Rich, and Jesmyn Ward.

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