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BA PILOT IN RACE TO WIN MAJOR CHILDREN'S BOOK PRIZE

Waterstone's today announced that a British Airways pilot has been shortlisted for the 2009 Waterstone's Children's Book Prize, one of the most valuable and prestigious children's book awards in the country.

Rob Stevens, author of *The Mapmaker's Monsters*, has been flying for British Airways for thirteen years, and wrote his debut novel between flights in hotel rooms across the world. A 15th century swashbuckling adventure across the seas, *The Mapmaker's Monsters* has been praised by the leading bookseller for its suspense, humour and the wonderful way in which it plays with language.

Stevens said: "I am incredibly excited and flattered to be shortlisted for the Waterstone's prize. To be honest I still can't quite believe it's happening. It's a huge honour. I find writing to be the perfect contrast to my job as a pilot. While commercial aviation is all about safety - following rules and avoiding risk - there are no hard and fast rules about writing and the more risky situations I can conjure up the better."

Celebrating its fifth year, the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize was created to champion new and emerging children's writers. This year's shortlist is particularly notable for the diverse backgrounds of the nominated authors, with a former pianist, a finalist from 2004 reality TV show "Spy", a home-educator and an ex-security guard for the National Museum of Scotland also making the list.

Sarah Clarke, Waterstone's Children's Manager said: "Rob Stevens proves new talent can be found anywhere - even in the clouds. We're incredibly excited by the quality and range of this year's shortlist, which includes everything from adventure and mystery to a page-turning horror story featuring vampires and werewolves - a new rival to Stephenie Meyer, perhaps?"

The eight shortlisted authors competing for the coveted award are as follows:

How Kirsty Jenkins Stole the Elephant by Elen Caldecott (Bloomsbury)

Zelah Green Queen of Clean by Vanessa Curtis (Egmont)

Changeling by Steve Feasey (Macmillan)

Thirteen Treasures by Michelle Harrison (Simon and Schuster)

Gnomes Are Forever by Ceci Jenkinson (Faber)

Lady in the Tower by Marie-Louise Jensen (Oxford University Press)

The Mapmaker's Monster by Rob Stevens (Macmillan)

Numbers by Rachel Ward (Chicken House)

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Final judging is currently underway, and the winner will be announced at a reception at Waterstone's Piccadilly (London), Europe's largest bookstore, on Wednesday 18th February. As well as a £5000 cash prize, the winning author will see a significant boost in sales, and the promise of ongoing commitment to their writing career from Waterstone's 320 branches nationwide.

For further press information, author and jacket images, and interview requests please contact Anwen Hooson at Riot Communications on 020 3174 0118 / 07899 798885 / anwen@riotcommunications.com

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Waterstone's Children's Book Prize is open to authors writing for 7-14 year-olds who have written two fiction titles or less, and is unique in that it is voted for solely by booksellers across the country.

Previous winners of the prize include *The Diamond of Drury Lane* by Julia Golding, which also went on to win the Nestle Smarties Book Prize, and Sally Nicholls' highly acclaimed story of a terminally ill 11-year-old, *Ways to Live Forever*.

Waterstone's is the UK's leading specialist bookseller with over 300 branches in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as branches in Eire, in Amsterdam and Brussels, on the Isle of Man and Jersey. Its transactional website Waterstones.com was launched in 2006, and there are currently over 2 million holders of the Waterstone's Card. Waterstone's was named Bookselling Company of the Year at the Bookseller Retail Awards 2008.

www.waterstones.com/wcbp

Shortlist details and bookseller comments:

HOW KIRSTY JENKINS STOLE THE ELEPHANT by ELEN CALDECOTT

"As her family struggles to cope after the death of her beloved Grandfather, Kirsty Jenkins main concern is to keep her last promise to him, to look after his allotment. As the council refuse to listen to her, she ropes in her stepbrother and sister and comes up with an unusual plan of action, involving skateboards and an elephant! Based on a true story, this is an original, funny and inspiring book." - **Jenny Lee, Waterstone's Orpington**

Elen Caldecott hails from the Welsh town of Llangollen and recently graduated with an MA in Writing for Young People from Bath Spa University. Before becoming a writer, she was an archaeologist, a nurse, a theatre usher and a security guard at the National Museum of Scotland. Elen now lives in Bristol with her husband, Simon.

ZELAH GREEN QUEEN OF CLEAN by VANESSA CURTIS

"Vanessa Curtis deals with a serious subject with charm and humour. With a plot very loosely based on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, this is the story of Zelah, an ordinary girl with an extraordinary name. Having been through difficult times, Zelah develops OCD, which starts to take over her life. With help and affection from other people, she manages to conquer it. The other children she meets during her treatment all have problems of their own, but they are also all moving, sympathetic characters in their own way." - **Leila R, Waterstone's Brussels**

Vanessa Curtis originally trained as a pianist before becoming a freelance journalist. She is the author of two biographies on Virginia Woolf as well as a reviewer of fiction and non-fiction for broadsheet newspapers. She lives and works near Chichester Harbour.

CHANGELING by STEVE FEASEY

"This fast-paced, fully-loaded supernatural adventure doesn't neglect to make its hero, Trey, convincing and sympathetic. Brought up in a care home, he thinks he has no family, until he meets the enigmatic, powerful Lucien Charron. Like an action film, the book sweeps you up into a glamorous, high-octane world that also happens to be bursting with demons, vampires and other creatures." - **Leila R, Waterstone's Brussels**

Steve Feasey lives in Herts with this family. After a successful career in the photographic industry, he set up his own printing company, which he still runs in between writing. Steve was a finalist in the 2004 reality TV show "Spy", where amongst other things, he learned to drive a tank. *Changeling* is his first book.

THIRTEEN TREASURES by MICHELLE HARRISON

"Able to see what most would never dream of, Tanya can distinguish the everyday fairies which inhabit our world. When Tanya is sent away to live with her Grandmother a certain cloud of doom settles over her holiday plans. When Fabian, the annoying caretakers' son, uncovers an unsolved mystery that has hung over the manor for fifty years Tanya sets her sights on uncovering the truth. With the full impact of a Brothers Grimm fairy tale Michelle Harrison writes with a gritty cinematic glow." - **John Lloyd, Waterstone's Bath**

Michelle Harrison is a twenty-eight year-old editorial assistant, and was formerly a bookseller at Ottakar's and Waterstone's. Originally from Grays in Essex, she is a keen illustrator as well as a writer and now lives in Oxfordshire with her partner.

GNOMES ARE FOREVER by CECI JENKINSON

"Best friends Oli and Skipjack have to endure generous and daily portions of hostility from their ape-like bus driver Mr Grimble. Deciding that enough is enough they hatch a plan to "liberate" the myriad of gnomes Mr Grimble cultivates in his front garden. Whilst the mischievous pair position their plot, the infamous cat burglar also prepares a scheme to do away with the Black Star Diamond from the town's museum. How these two conspiracies spectacularly collide is left up to you to uncover! Wonderfully entertaining." - **John Lloyd, Waterstone's Bath**

Ceci Jenkinson is the author of *The Mum Shop*, the first story in Oli and Skipjack's *Tales of Trouble* series. *Gnomes are Forever* is her second children's book. She lives in Wrexham, North Wales with her husband and two young sons.

LADY IN THE TOWER by MARIE-LOUISE JENSEN

"A cracking good read. From the bare bones of an obscure historical incident Jensen has fashioned a fast moving, exciting story with a flawed but strong female protagonist, who attempts to gain freedom and justice for her mother and herself against a background of action and romance." - **Helen Bowles, Waterstone's Birmingham High Street**

Marie-Louise Jensen was born in Henley-on-Thames of an English father and Danish mother. Her early years were plagued by teachers telling her to get her nose out of a book and learn useful things like maths. She now lives in Bath, reads, reviews and writes books for young people, and home educates her two sons. Her debut novel, *Between Two Seas*, was published to huge acclaim and was shortlisted for the Waterstone's Children's Book Award in 2008.

NUMBERS by RACHEL WARD

"Jem has a terrifying gift. Jem doesn't see people she sees only numbers. 12052026, 08032009, 05082010, though these aren't just numbers, they are dates that bring fatal guarantees. Trapped in the monotony of a foster family that don't understand her and a school that chooses to ignore her, Jem finds most of her time spent alone. Catching the unwanted attention of Spider, she finds herself in the start of a close relationship with a most unlikely individual. When Jem uses her gift to prevent Spider lethally riding the London Eye the pair begin a life on the run accused of terrorism. A true pulse racing narrative that leaving you breathless after the first chapter."

- **John Lloyd, Waterstone's Bath**

Rachel Ward was born in Surrey and studied at Durham University. Never really knowing what she wanted to be when she 'grew up' she drifted into working in local government. She started writing five years ago and got her lucky break by meeting her now-editor at a festival. Rachel is married with two children and lives in Bath.

THE MAPMAKER'S MONSTER by ROB STEVENS

"The story opens on Hugo's (honest, undaunted, gallant and optimistic) 12th Birthday. He lives with his uncle, a former explorer and mapmaker extraordinaire. They are currently land based and living in poverty because Uncle Walter has lost his nerve following an expedition that left Hugo as an orphan. A desire for adventure runs through Hugo's veins and when he sees the launching of Rupert Lilywhite's new ship he grabs his chance and signs on as Mapmaker to the crew. So does Uncle Walter. The story is full of suspense and anticipation, and every scary situation is built up wonderfully. A very gifted writer." - **Sarah Salmon, Waterstone's Norwich**

Rob Stevens is a pilot for British Airways. *The Mapmaker's Monsters* is his first series for children. When at home, he lives in Dorset with his wife and two young children.



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