



**Waterstone's Press Release**

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# **Super Thursday Stakes**

**Place your bets on who will have the No. 1 book  
this Christmas**

*London, Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September...* The battle for the number one bestselling book at Christmas is as hotly contested as the race for the top of the pop charts every year. This Christmas, for the very first time, punters and book lovers will be able to place their bets as to which title will be the nation's number one in Christmas week (chart for week ending 19<sup>th</sup> December). William Hill, with the help of the nation's leading bookseller Waterstone's, are offering odds on some of the likely candidates for the number one slot, as determined by sales tracked by Nielsen Book via its continuous retail monitoring service BookScan\*. Bets can be placed from today, Super Thursday – the day hundreds of potential Christmas bestsellers are published. "Super Thursday is the unofficial start to the Christmas books season," says Waterstone's M.D. Gerry Johnson.

The list includes novels and non-fiction, as well as children's books and reference titles. Some of the biggest names in books are present, including Dan Brown, Jamie Oliver, Winnie the Pooh and *Guinness World Records*. Celebrities are of course well represented, with comedians and entertainers such as Frankie Boyle, Jo Brand, Jack Dee and Justin Lee Collins out in force. The sporting world is represented by Andrew Flintoff and Jenson Button, who will hope that their brilliant years translate into even more brilliant bestsellers.

"It's very difficult to predict what will be the number one book in Christmas week. Cookery books do very well at Christmas and may sell more over the whole season, but that final week is tough to judge," say Waterstone's spokesman Jon Howells. He says that celebrity memoirs often take the crown in the last few shopping days before Christmas. "Russell Brand was number one in 2007; Peter Kay did it in 2006 and Jamie Oliver in 2005. Peter and Jamie are both back this year, but so are many other huge names – there is no sure thing."

Last year's Christmas Number One was 'Harry Potter' author J.K. Rowling, with *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*. Rowling does not have a new title this season but the 2004 victor Dan Brown does. His new novel, *The Lost Symbol*, was published recently and has broken sales records. "*The Da Vinci Code* paperback was the Christmas number one at the height of Dan Brown mania across the world. His new book is in hardback and is breaking records, but nothing can be taken for granted in Christmas week," says Howells.

Waterstone's will help advise William Hill should punters want to place bets on books that do not yet have odds announced. "There will inevitably be some unpredicted bestsellers as there are every year, like *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* and *Schott's Miscellany*. The Booker winner, announced next week, will also be a contender," said Waterstone's Jon Howells. "At this point, it's anyone's bet what will be the number one book this Christmas."

The bookies agree: "Dan Brown is the obvious favourite but by Christmas week most of those desperate to read the book might already have bought it. If there is to be a shock result maybe Peter Kay, the second favourite, will provide it. This is a new betting market for us and we're sure it will appeal to punters and readers alike!" said William Hill spokesman Graham Sharpe.

Ann Betts, Commercial Director of Nielsen Book said: "The BookScan TCM measures sales from over 8,500 retailers in the UK every week and so accurately represents sales and is the authority used by all in the book industry. Over a third of books are sold in the 12 weeks leading up to Christmas so with such a strong release of new titles this week and beyond, we hope to see good book sales, despite the current economic climate."

#### **Opening odds from William Hill:**

##### **5/2 Dan Brown – *The Lost Symbol***

Dan Brown won the Christmas number one race back in 2004 with the paperback of *The Da Vinci Code*. Now he's in better form than ever, with *The Lost Symbol* having broken all course records.

##### **3/1 Peter Kay – *Saturday Night Peter***

Peter romped home in 2006, and all eyes will be on him for his second outing.

##### **4/1 Ant & Dec – *Ooh! What a Lovely Pair***

They've had been stars of kids TV, the pop charts and are the reigning kings of light entertainment. But as there are two of them, should this be an each way bet?

##### **9/2 Guinness World Records**

This perennial bestseller is in a field of its own, but often runs too quickly in the early stages, and flags in the final furlongs. Can it stay the pace this year?

##### **9/2 Jamie Oliver – *Jamie's America***

Jamie is a thoroughbred, with a decade's worth of hit books to his name. His new book was early out of the paddock but he's proven before he has the legs for a long race, and on recent form has to be the favourite.

**10/1** Jeremy Clarkson – *Driven to Distraction*

Everyone either loves or loves to hate Clarkson. He'll be a contender all the way, but might find the last few hurdles a challenge, especially if he's on four wheels.

**10/1** Stephenie Meyer – *New Moon*

There's nothing hotter than vampires at the moment, so this could be the first paperback to take the title since *The Da Vinci Code*.

**12/1** Winnie the Pooh (David Benedictus) – *Return to Hundred Acre Wood*

The bear with little brain has been resting for decades, but who doesn't love him? If everyone who loves Pooh buys a copy, then he will romp home.

**16/1** Frankie Boyle – *My Shit Life So Far*

A real dark (ginger) horse here. Boyle is the edgiest, most fearless comedian of the day. He may not have Russell Brand's looks, but for cult appeal he is neck and neck.

**16/1** Jo Brand – *Look Back in Hunger*

Jo's had a few practice races with her humour titles and her novels, but she's in the big leagues now. She'll need all her wit around her to turn her from Sea Monster to Seabiscuit!

**16/1** Katie Price – *Standing Out*

Ms Price can usually guarantee herself a spot at the top of the chart, but the stakes are highest at Christmas.

**16/1** Delia Smith – *Delia's Happy Christmas*

Delia used to 'own' Christmas so knows the course well and this year she's got the perfect book for the season – could this see her back at the top?

**20/1** Jack Dee – *Thanks for Nothing*

There are a lot of riders from the comedy stable this year. Expect to see him, Brand and Boyle all jostling for position.

**25/1** Andrew Flintoff – *Ashes to Ashes*

Flintoff is known for his celebrating, and by helping England win the Ashes he has a great chance of having the bestselling sports book of the year.

**25/1** Steig Larsson – *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest*

Could Steig Larsson be the first deceased author to take the Christmas number one slot? Everyone is reading 'The Millennium Trilogy', and this is the final volume.

**25/1** Justin Lee Collins – *Good Times*

The wild-haired boy from Bristol has the energy to take the title, but does he have the followers? It'll be "Good Times" in the winner's enclosure if he does.

**25/1 Andrew Marr – *The Making of Modern Britain***

He's up against some big names, but this is one of our most popular and respected journalist/broadcasters tackling a huge subject – don't rule out a good run.

**33/1 Jenson Button - *My Championship Year***

If Jenson wins the F1 championship he might find himself a runner for the Christmas number one as well.

**33/1 Alan Davies – *My Favourite People and Me 1978 - 1988***

As Jonathan Creek he can win by slight of hand, and he's always quite interesting to watch, but will *My Favourite People and Me* be enough to send him to number one?

**33/1 Chris Evans – *It's Not What You Think***

Evans is on the turf at long last, timed perfectly as he takes over from Terry Wogan on Radio 2. If his new listeners turn out in force he could be in the running.

*\*Sales are tracked through the BookScan TCM panel of UK bookshops, supermarkets, internet sites, other retailers and newspapers. The BookScan TCM is the leading market measure and the source of bestseller lists used by the media in the UK and Ireland.*

## **Notes for editors**

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](http://Waterstones.com) was launched in 2006, and there are currently over 2 million holders of the Waterstone's Card. Waterstone's was named High Street Retailer of the Year at the Bookseller Retail Awards 2009.

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**About Nielsen Book**

Nielsen Book has four key brands: Registration Agencies (ISBN, ISTC and SAN), BookData, BookNet and BookScan. The Nielsen BookData service provides comprehensive, enriched and timely bibliographic data worldwide. There is a range of information services to booksellers, libraries and publishers in 100 countries around the world. The Nielsen BookNet service provides value-added transaction services to the industry. The Nielsen BookScan service provides the world's only continuous retail monitoring service for English-language books in the UK, Ireland, US, Australia, South Africa, Italy, New Zealand, Denmark and Spain. The group employs 120 staff in the UK.

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