

****Strictly embargoed until 20.00 GMT, Wednesday 18th February 2009****

MODERN FAIRY TALE, SEVEN YEARS IN THE MAKING, SCOOPS MAJOR BOOK PRIZE

Début author Michelle Harrison saw seven years of hard work rewarded this evening when she beat stiff competition to win the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize, one of the most valuable and prestigious children's book awards in the country.

Harrison, 29, wrote the first few chapters of her award-winning book, *The 13 Treasures*, whilst at University in Stafford in 2002. Seven years, and several rejection letters later, Harrison's novel is now set to be one of the biggest debuts of the year. Rave reviews are flooding in, and the book has already been sold in the USA, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia, Serbia and Spain.

Harrison's novel, *The 13 Treasures*, was hailed the winner of the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize 2009 in an evening ceremony at Waterstone's Piccadilly, Europe's largest bookstore, on 18th February. As well as a £5,000 cash prize, she receives the promise of ongoing commitment from Waterstone's 320 nationwide branches.

Modern in its setting, but classic in its telling, *The 13 Treasures* is the story of a teenage girl with the ability to see fairies, trying to solve the mystery that has haunted her family for generations.

The leading bookseller has drawn comparisons with *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, and the classic fairy tales of *The Brothers Grimm*. Sarah Clarke, Waterstone's Children's Manager, described the book as 'a brilliantly imaginative debut novel that will charm and enthrall a generation of readers'.

Industry expert Caroline Horn, Children's News Editor of *The Bookseller*, said:

'*The 13 Treasures* is an inventive fairy story that makes you glad you can't see fairies! Michelle Harrison is a great new talent and I'll be looking out for her next book'.

A former barmaid, art gallery attendant, and children's bookseller for Ottakar's and Waterstone's, Michelle now works as an Editorial Assistant in children's publishing. She is also a keen illustrator (her book features her own black & white chapter illustrations) and is currently working on the sequel to *The 13 Treasures*. Originally from Grays in Essex, she now lives in Oxfordshire with her partner.

For further press information and interview requests please contact Anwen Hooson at

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

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 British Airways pilot, 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 making the shortlist.

The eight shortlisted authors competing for the coveted award were 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)

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 Nestlé 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.

Discover more on Waterstones.com/wcbp

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