

Press Release

Immediate Release: Tuesday 10 June 2008

Harry Potter Prequel sold for £25,000 at Waterstone's charity auction

An 800 word prequel to the Harry Potter series, handwritten and signed by JK Rowling, sold for £25,000 tonight at a charity auction run by Waterstone's to benefit English PEN and Dyslexia Action. The card was one of 13 original A5 storycards donated by world famous authors for the book chain's *What's Your Story?* Campaign, raising a total of £47,150 for the two charities.

The auction was taken by Sotheby's auctioneer Edward Rising and attracted a frenzied bidding. Other high bids from the evening included Tom Stoppard's card which sold for £4,000.00, and Doris Lessing's, which sold for £3,000.00.

JK Rowling commented: "I had great fun writing the card and I'm absolutely delighted that it has raised £25,000 for two such worthy causes."

JK Rowling's story is set three years before Harry is born and features the characters Sirius Black and James Potter, Harry's father. The story opens with a youthful Sirius and James cornered by two irate policemen at the end of a high-speed motorcycle chase. After a cheeky exchange with the policemen, the two teenage characters make their escape - using broomsticks, "drumsticks" and just a little bit of magic.

The card finishes with the handwritten words – "From the prequel I am not working on – but that was fun!" and JK Rowling's signature, dated May 2008.

Gerry Johnson Managing Director, Waterstone's said: "We never imagined when Waterstone's started *What's Your Story?* that we would end up with authors who have won the Booker, the Nobel Prize and so many other accolades, great storytellers one and all, including the writer of the bestselling books in history. We're proud to have helped raise so much for two marvellous charities, both so important, especially in this National Year of Reading."

To meet the massive demand from fans to read these stories, Waterstone's is already taking pre-orders for an exclusive limited edition *What's Your Story?* postcard book published in early August, with all profits again going to the two charities. Also, from tomorrow, June 11th, all the stories will be available to read, at Waterstones.com and in Waterstone's store windows. Waterstone's National Press Officer Jon Howells said: "Waterstone's is very grateful to all 13 authors for allowing us to host their stories online and in stores, as well as feature them in the postcard book, for which we've already taken several thousand pre-orders. It means that not only do the charities benefit, but the whole world will get to read these small, but perfectly formed tales."

The full list of authors who donated to the *What's Your Story?* auction is: **Lisa Appignanesi, Margaret Atwood, Lauren Child, Sebastian Faulks, Richard Ford, Neil Gaiman, Nick Hornby, Doris Lessing, Michael Rosen, JK Rowling, Axel Scheffler, Tom Stoppard and Irvine Welsh.**

Proceeds from the auction and all profits from the postcard book sales will go to English PEN and Dyslexia Action.

Lisa Appignanesi, President, English PEN says: 'English PEN is deeply grateful to Waterstone's and to all the writers who freely gave their words to create this wonderful storytelling event. The money raised here will go towards PEN's work in freeing the words of writers around the world as well as promoting literature, which provides a bridge for greater understanding between people everywhere.'

Shirley Cramer, Chief Executive Officer of Dyslexia Action, added: "We are extremely grateful to the wonderful storytellers and to Waterstone's. The funds raised will help Dyslexia Action support many more children and adults to become readers."

Another highlight of the evening included Margaret Atwood joining the auction live from Paris to write her original storycard via her unique LongPen™ machine, which allows her to sign books remotely using a touch sensitive pad and a computer link-up to guide a robotic arm

Highlights of the auctioned storycards which will feature in the *What's Your Story?* postcard book include:

- **Lisa Appignanesi** – Appignanesi has delivered a clever, poignant tale of all-consuming love and the consequences of desire
- **Margaret Atwood** – The Man Booker winner tells of marital strife in the Canute household – with explosive results
- **Lauren Child** – Utilising all her skills as a writer and artist, Lauren Child's rumination on everlasting bad hair days is typically creative and very funny
- **Sebastian Faulks** – Desire and obsession lie at the heart of Faulks' classically-inspired erotic tale
- **Richard Ford** – A stranger's selfless determination to do the right thing in the face of grief inspires another when they cross paths on a train, in Ford's typically thoughtful study
- **Neil Gaiman** – Gaiman is a master of short fiction, and this story is a great example of his work – spooky, scary and with a killer twist. A great detective mulls over a series of gruesome murders: is the killer on the loose in the woods, or somewhere closer to home...
- **Nick Hornby** – Hornby calls on his love of pop-culture for this mixture of collage and text, introducing the newest, oddest superhero on the scene – Nightburner!
- **Doris Lessing** – The Nobel laureate's story is one that celebrates the power of reading and will tug at the heartstrings of any booklover
- **Michael Rosen** – The Children's laureate delivers an acerbic tale that shows that not only can't you fight City Hall, you can't outbid it either
- **JK Rowling** - Rowling's 800-word story reveals a unique prequel to the Harry Potter series. The card finishes with the handwritten words – “From the prequel I am not working on – but that was fun!” and the author's signature, dated May 2008
- **Axel Scheffler** – In four perfect frames, Scheffler tells a small, but perfectly formed, tale of the Gruffalo, with a brilliant punchline
- **Tom Stoppard** – Nothing gets past Inspector Chamberlain in Tom Stoppard's brilliantly theatrical short mystery

- **Irvine Welsh** - This tale of a taciturn oil rig worker at odds with his lot is vintage Welsh and full of earthy language and humour

www.waterstones.com/whatsyourstory

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Notes to Editor:

- All thirteen author storycards, as well as selected customer and bookseller cards, will go on sale this August in a *What's Your Story?* Postcard Book with a retail price of £5. Pre-orders can be placed now in Waterstone's branches and at Waterstones.com. All profits will go to English PEN and Dyslexia Action
- The author storycards will available to read at Waterstones.com from 6am on Wednesday 11th June and at Waterstone's stores from midday.
- *What's Your Story?* forms part of the Waterstone's *Writer's Year* which will see unique projects unveiled each month, celebrating the writer and coinciding with the National Year of Reading 2008. The monthly events included the introduction of *The Bookseller's Bursary* in April, a scheme designed to encourage budding authors within the company by sending two booksellers on an all expenses paid writing course. In May, Sebastian Faulks selected 40 books that shaped his writing for *The Writer's Table*, and October will see the launch of the Waterstone's *Featured Poet*.

- English PEN is the founding centre of International PEN, a membership association with 145 branches in more than one hundred countries, providing an active and supportive community for writers and readers around the world. PEN was founded in 1921 by Amy Dawson Scott in order to promote literature as a means of greater understanding between cultures. The President of English PEN is Lisa Appignanesi and the Director is Jonathan Heawood. For more information visit www.englishpen.org.
- Dyslexia Action is a national charity and the UK's leading provider of services and support for people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. It specialises in assessment teaching and training. It also develops and distributes teaching materials and undertakes research. Dyslexia Action services are available through its 26 centres and 160 teaching locations around the UK. Over half a million people benefit from its work each year. For more information visit www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk.
- Waterstone's opened its first bookshop in 1982 and is now the UK's leading specialist bookseller. With a reputation built upon the knowledge and enthusiasm of our 4,500 booksellers, Waterstone's aims to interest and excite its customers, continually inspiring people to read and engage in books. An average sized Waterstone's store merchandises a range of around 30,000 individual books, with 200,000 titles in the largest store
- The auction was taken by Sotheby's auctioneer Edward Rising. Edward is one of a host of Sotheby's employees who dedicates much time and energy to assisting with charity auctions for a wide variety of causes. In 2007, Sotheby's UK auctioneers took no fewer than 73 charity auctions at venues throughout the country, raising a total of £27.3 million. Charities that benefited included: The Royal Marsden Hospital; Royal Academy Schools; Marie Curie Cancer Care; The Prince's Trust; and Elton John Aids Foundation.