



Press release

[Under strict embargo until 18:00 on Tuesday 5 December 2017](#)

## **Cressida Cowell crowned UK literacy champion as she wins Ruth Rendell Award 2017**

Cressida Cowell has won the coveted Ruth Rendell Award 2017 for her tireless championing of literacy throughout the UK. The beloved children's author and illustrator was presented with the award this evening [5 December] by John Glen MP, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, at the All-Party Parliamentary Writers Group Winter Reception in the House of Commons.

The award, launched in memory of bestselling author Ruth Rendell in 2016 by the National Literacy Trust and Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, celebrates the author who has done the most to champion literacy throughout the UK over the past year.

Over the course of the year, Cressida Cowell:

- Travelled the length and breadth of the UK to deliver reading for enjoyment and creative writing events and workshops to 15,000 school children
- Was an author ambassador for a wealth of literacy campaigns on behalf of charities and organisations including the National Literacy Trust, BookTrust, The Reading Agency, World Book Day and the Premier League
- Judged several creative writing and drawing competitions for children, including Blue Peter's *Design a Dragon for the Kew Garden Pagoda* competition, as well as a number of book awards, including the *Costa Book Award*, the *Wicked Young Writer Awards* and the *Carmelite Prize*
- Won the prestigious Hay Festival Medal for Fiction (the first children's author to pick up the prize in the award's history)

### **On winning the Ruth Rendell Award 2017, Cressida Cowell said:**

"I'm deeply touched and honoured to be the recipient of this year's Ruth Rendell Award. Thank you so much to the National Literacy Trust, ALCS and the judging panel. I do feel, though, that I should be passing it back to the National Literacy Trust, whose unstinting work on behalf of children is so crucial.

I'm part of a community of authors, librarians, teachers, booksellers and literacy organisations whose advocacy is still very badly needed: one in eight disadvantaged children still do not own a book, and one in three children leave Primary School lacking the ability to read well. My first role as a children's book writer is to get as many children as possible reading for pleasure, in the same way that I read for the joy of it when I was a child. Books have a unique capacity for awakening empathy and creative thinking, and reading for pleasure has a significant, measurable impact on academic achievement, happiness and earning potential."

### **Jonathan Douglas, Director of the National Literacy Trust, said:**

"We are delighted to announce Cressida as the winner of this year's Ruth Rendell Award. Cressida lives and breathes her faith in the transformative power of books, making it both her personal and professional mission to change children's lives through literacy. Not only have Cressida's wonderfully



written and illustrated books inspired millions of children to fall in love with reading, but her workshops and events are legendary for inspiring children to start writing stories of their own. Cressida's wonderful impact on children's literacy in the UK cannot be underestimated."

**Barbara Hayes, Deputy Chief Executive of ALCS, said:**

"Ruth was for many years an officer of the All-Party Parliamentary Writers Group, and a great advocate for writers and literacy, and we're absolutely thrilled to be involved in this fitting tribute to her. Our congratulations go to Cressida who is a worthy winner of this award."

Cressida Cowell's latest book, *The Wizard of Once* (published by Hodder Children's Books), is out now.

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to Editors**

For further information please contact Lisa Gilbert, Media and Communications Manager at the National Literacy Trust on 020 7820 6275, [lisa.gilbert@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:lisa.gilbert@literacytrust.org.uk) or 07701 023 759 (out of hours).

**About Ruth Rendell**

Ruth Rendell, who died in 2015 aged 85, was a bestselling author known for writing thrillers and psychological murder mysteries including the Inspector Wexford series. She also wrote under the pen name Barbara Vine and won a number of awards for her books in a career which spanned six decades. Ruth Rendell was a long-time supporter of the National Literacy Trust.

**About the National Literacy Trust**

We are an independent charity dedicated to raising literacy levels in the UK. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy. We run projects in the poorest communities, campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians and parents, and support schools.

Visit [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) to find out more, donate or sign up for our free email newsletter. You can also find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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**The Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society (ALCS)**

ALCS provides a unique service for all types of author. ALCS collect money for authors that can't be administered on an individual basis, from all over the world, from a wide variety of sources and pay it to them. ALCS campaign for the rights of authors' and provide a collective voice for the wide variety of individuals that make up their Membership. They educate about the principles of copyright and intellectual property and their importance to authors to the general public.

ALCS currently has over 90,000 writer members and, since its inception in 1977, has paid over £450million to the nation's writers. [www.alcs.co.uk](http://www.alcs.co.uk)

**About Cressida Cowell**

Cressida Cowell is the author and the illustrator of the bestselling *How to Train Your Dragon* book series. Her latest book *The Wizards of Once* is an international bestseller. Cressida is also the author of the *Emily Brown* picture books, illustrated by Neal Layton. *How to Train Your Dragon* has sold over 8 million books worldwide in



38 languages. It is also an award-winning DreamWorks film series, and a TV series shown on Netflix and CBBC. The first book in Cressida's new series, *The Wizards of Once* (also signed by DreamWorks), is a number one bestseller. Cressida is an ambassador for the National Literacy Trust and the Reading Agency and a founder patron of the Children's Media Foundation. She has won numerous prizes for her books, including the Gold Award in the Nestle Children's Book Prize, the Hay Festival Medal for Fiction, and Philosophy Now' magazine's 2015 Award for Contributions in the Fight Against Stupidity.

She grew up in London and on a small, uninhabited island off the west coast of Scotland and she now lives in Hammersmith with her husband, three children and a dog called Pigeon.

Twitter: @CressidaCowell

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