

Press release
Embargoed until 15 April

Judges announced for David Cohen Prize for Literature 2019

The David Cohen Prize for Literature is one of literature's most prestigious prizes, awarding £40,000 every two years in recognition of a living writer's lifetime achievement.

The winner of the prize is nominated and selected by a panel of judges comprising authors, literary critics and academics. The 2019 judges are: Imtiaz Dharker, Viv Groskop, Kate Maltby, Jon McGregor, David Park, and Zoe Strimpel. Mark Lawson will again act as chair of the judges.

The David Cohen Prize for Literature recognises the whole body of work of writers from the UK and Ireland. Former winners include V S Naipaul, Doris Lessing, Seamus Heaney, Hilary Mantel, and most recently, in 2017, Tom Stoppard.

The John S Cohen Foundation funds the David Cohen Prize. Established in 1965 by David Cohen and his family, the John S Cohen Foundation supports education, the arts, conservation and the environment.

Dr David Cohen, chair of the John S Cohen Foundation, said: 'I thank our jury members for the time and effort that they are about to devote to their task of choosing the 15th winner of this prize. They join a long and distinguished list of earlier judges and I look forward to sitting in on and learning from their deliberations.'

The David Cohen Prize is managed by the literature development organisation, New Writing North, which will announce the winner at a ceremony in London on 12 November 2019.

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North, said: 'New Writing North is immensely proud to be working with the John S Cohen Foundation to manage the 2019 David Cohen Prize for Literature. Over three decades, the Prize has honoured the monumental achievements of some of the world's most remarkable literary talents – writers who have etched their words into the fabric of Britain and Ireland and gifted us incalculable quantities of inspiration. This year's judges have the daunting task of selecting another writer to join this esteemed roster of genius and we're thrilled to be alongside them on the literary journey that judging this unique prize will take them on.'

Judges' comments:

'I'm so looking forward to locking swords with this brainy and ridiculously well-read band of judges. In an era fuelled by the curse of the Zeitgeist and 280-character soundbites, it's simply wonderful to spend some time thinking about the writers whose ideas and visions have endured over decades.' **Viv Groskop**

'I'm delighted to be one of the judges for this year's David Cohen Prize, and to be given the opportunity to study the work of some of our finest writers across their entire careers. I'm sure I will learn a lot from my reading, and from the discussions with my fellow judges, and I look forward to being part of a careful and well-argued decision.'

Jon McGregor

'It is a great honour and a great responsibility to be a judge for the David Cohen Prize. I have no doubt that our deliberations will be both passionate and thoughtful. I very much look forward to the experience.'

David Park

'Since childhood, literature has profoundly shaped my views, feelings and outlook and, despite now being a historian, my first true love (and degree) was English. I am truly thrilled to be participating in the allocation of such a prestigious award, and excited to be able to offer a token of appreciation to a writer whose skill and humanity will have changed the way countless people look at the world.'

Zoe Strimpel

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NOTES TO EDITOR

New Writing North is the literature development agency for the North of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation www.newwritingnorth.com. It works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the David Cohen Prize for Literature, the Northern Writers' Awards, New Writing North Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.

Previous winners of the David Cohen Prize for Literature:

- 2017 Tom Stoppard
- 2015 Tony Harrison
- 2013 Hilary Mantel
- 2011 Julian Barnes
- 2009 Seamus Heaney
- 2007 Derek Mahon
- 2005 Michael Holroyd
- 2003 Beryl Bainbridge and Thom Gunn (joint winners)
- 2001 Doris Lessing
- 1999 William Trevor
- 1997 Muriel Spark
- 1995 Harold Pinter
- 1993 V S Naipaul

Judges' biographies

Imtiaz Dharker is a poet and artist, awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, 2014. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, she has been Poet in Residence at Cambridge University Library and worked on several projects across art forms in Leeds, Newcastle and Hull, as well as the Archives of St Paul's Cathedral. Her six collections include *Over the Moon* and the latest, *Luck is the Hook*, and her poems have been broadcast widely on BBC Radio 3 and 4 as well as the BBC World Service. She also scripts and directs video films, and has had eleven solo exhibitions of drawings.

Viv Groskop is a writer, critic, broadcaster and stand-up comedian. She has presented *Front Row* and *Saturday Review* on BBC Radio 4, is a regular on BBC1's *This Week* and has hosted book tours for Graham Norton, Jo Brand and Jennifer Saunders. Groskop's books include *The Anna Karenina Fix: Life Lessons from Russian Literature*, and *How to Own the Room: Women and the Art of Brilliant Speaking*. She is currently writing a self-help memoir titled *Au Revoir, Tristesse: Lessons in Happiness from French Literature* due out in 2020.

Mark Lawson is a journalist, broadcaster, dramatist and author. He is a columnist and feature writer for *The Guardian*, columnist for the *New Statesman* and theatre critic of *The Tablet*. As a writer-presenter in TV and radio, his work includes *Front Row*, *Foreign Bodies: A Journey Through European Crime Fiction* and *Capturing America: A History of Modern American Literature* (all BBC Radio 4) and the TV interview series *Mark Lawson Talks To...* for BBC4. He presented BBC2's weekly arts round up from 1993 to 2005 under the titles *Late Review*, *Review* and *Newsnight Review*. His books include *The Allegations*, *The Deaths* and *The Battle for Room Service*. He has chaired the David Cohen Prize since 2011.

Kate Maltby is a political columnist and culture critic, with a focus on theatre. She began her career writing for *The Times* and *The Spectator* and now writes regularly for the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian*, as well as a range of US publications. She is completing a PhD on the Latin writings of Queen Elizabeth. Kate is also a well-known broadcaster and sits on the board of Index on Censorship.

Jon McGregor is a writer of novels and short stories, most recently *The Reservoir Tapes* and *Reservoir 13*, winner of the Costa Novel Award in 2017. He has previously served as a judge for the Goldsmith's Prize, the BBC National Short Story Award, and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize. He is a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Nottingham, where he edits *The Letters Page*, a literary journal in letters.

David Park is the author of nine novels and two collections of short stories. His first novel *The Healing* won the Authors' Club First Novel Award. *The Truth Commissioner* was awarded the Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize and adapted for film; *The Light of Amsterdam* was shortlisted for the IMPAC Prize and *The Poets' Wives* was Belfast's One City One Book. He has received a Major Artist Award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the American Ireland Fund Literary Award. His new novel, *Travelling in a Strange Land*, published in March 2018 by Bloomsbury, was shortlisted for the Irish Novel of the Year. His work has been widely published in translation.

Dr Zoe Strimpel is a historian of gender, feminism and dating in modern Britain, and a flagship columnist for the Sunday Telegraph. She is the author of *What the Hell Is He Thinking? All the Questions You Ever Asked About Men Answered* and *The Man Diet: One Woman's Quest To End Bad Romance*. Her academic monograph, *Seeking Love in Modern Britain: Gender, Dating and the Rise of the Single*, will be out with Bloomsbury in 2020. Zoe is currently a research fellow on a major project based at the British Library, where she is examining feminist publishing enterprises through the lens of *Spare Rib* (1972-1993), the iconic/infamous women's liberation magazine.