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# The 2020 Booker Prize for Fiction

## Longlist announced

[www.thebookerprizes.com](http://www.thebookerprizes.com)

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- Double winner Hilary Mantel makes the list with the third book in her Cromwell trilogy; Tsitsi Dangarembga is also longlisted with the third novel in a trilogy, a sequel to her African classic *Nervous Conditions*
- Eight are debut novelists: Diane Cook, Avni Doshi, Gabriel Krauze, Kiley Reid, Douglas Stuart, Brandon Taylor, Sophie Ward and C Pam Zhang
- Of the 13 longlisted authors, nine are women and four are men

The longlist, or ‘The Booker Dozen’, for The 2020 [Booker Prize](#) is announced today, Tuesday 28 July 2020.

This year’s longlist of 13 books was selected by a panel of five judges: [Margaret Busby](#) (chair), editor, literary critic and former publisher; [Lee Child](#), author; [Sameer Rahim](#), author and critic; [Lemn Sissay](#), writer and broadcaster; and [Emily Wilson](#), classicist and translator.

The list was chosen from 162 novels published in the UK or Ireland between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020.

The Booker Prize for Fiction is open to writers of any nationality, writing in English and published in the UK or Ireland.

The 2020 longlist, or ‘The Booker Dozen’, of 13 novels, is:

| <b>Author (country/territory)</b> | <b>Title (imprint)</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Diane Cook (USA)                  | <i>The New Wilderness</i> (Oneworld Publications)                         |
| Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe)     | <i>This Mournable Body</i> (Faber & Faber)                                |
| Avni Doshi (USA)                  | <i>Burnt Sugar</i> (Hamish Hamilton, Penguin Random House)                |
| Gabriel Krauze (UK)               | <i>Who They Was</i> (4 <sup>th</sup> Estate, HarperCollins)               |
| Hilary Mantel (UK)                | <i>The Mirror &amp; The Light</i> (4 <sup>th</sup> Estate, HarperCollins) |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Colum McCann (Ireland/USA)    | <i>Apeirogon</i> (Bloomsbury Publishing)                           |
| Maaza Mengiste (Ethiopia/USA) | <i>The Shadow King</i> (Canongate Books)                           |
| Kiley Reid (USA)              | <i>Such a Fun Age</i> (Bloomsbury Circus, Bloomsbury Publishing)   |
| Douglas Stuart (Scotland/USA) | <i>Shuggie Bain</i> (Picador, Pan Macmillan)                       |
| Brandon Taylor (USA)          | <i>Real Life</i> (Originals, Daunt Books Publishing)               |
| Anne Tyler (USA)              | <i>Redhead by The Side of The Road</i> (Chatto & Windus, Vintage)  |
| Sophie Ward (UK)              | <i>Love and Other Thought Experiments</i> (Corsair, Little, Brown) |
| C Pam Zhang (USA)             | <i>How Much of These Hills is Gold</i> (Virago, Little, Brown)     |

Margaret Busby, Chair of the 2020 judges, says:

“Each of these books carries an impact that has earned it a place on the longlist, deserving of wide readership. Included are novels carried by the sweep of history with memorable characters brought to life and given visibility, novels that represent a moment of cultural change, or the pressures an individual faces in pre- and post-dystopian society. Some of the books focus on interpersonal relationships that are complex, nuanced, emotionally charged. There are voices from minorities often unheard, stories that are fresh, bold and absorbing. The best fiction enables the reader to relate to other people’s lives; sharing experiences that we could not ourselves have imagined is as powerful as being able to identify with characters.

As judges we connected with these writers’ well-crafted prose, the mastery of detail, the arresting sentence, the credibility of the narrative arc, the ability to use to the full, the resources of storytelling. Unplanned, our final selection encompasses both seasoned favourites and debut talents – a truly satisfying outcome.”

Gaby Wood, Literary Director of the Booker Prize Foundation, adds:

“When the judges had drawn up their longlist of 13 books, one of them said: ‘Out of interest, how many debuts are there?’ We counted. It was more than half the list. That’s an unusually high proportion, and especially surprising to the judges themselves, who had admired many books by more established authors, and regretted having to let them go. It is perhaps obvious that powerful stories can come from unexpected places and in unfamiliar forms; nevertheless, this kaleidoscopic list serves as a reminder.

In this year of seismic change, visibility for new books published in the UK has been drastically low. So, however unintended the ratio, it’s especially heartening to know that some authors who have launched their careers in the midst of Covid-19 may now have a chance to reach the readers they deserve.”

The nine female authors are Diane Cook, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Avni Doshi, Hilary Mantel, Maaza Mengiste, Kiley Reid, Anne Tyler, Douglas Stuart, Sophie Ward and C Pam Zhang. The four male contenders are Gabriel Krauze, Colum McCann, Douglas Stuart and Brandon Taylor.

Three novelists have been longlisted before: Hilary Mantel (winner in 2009 for *Wolf Hall* and in 2012 for *Bring Up the Bodies*, longlisted in 2005 for *Beyond Black*), Anne Tyler (shortlisted in 2015 for *A Spool of Blue Thread*) and Colum McCann (longlisted in 2013 for *TransAtlantic*).

Four of the longlisted books come from independent publishers: Canongate Books, Daunt Books Publishing, Faber & Faber and Oneworld Publications.

### The shortlist and winner announcements

The shortlist of six books will be announced on **Tuesday 15 September**. The shortlisted authors each receive £2,500 and a specially bound edition of their book. The 2020 winner will be announced in November. Details will be announced shortly.

The winner of the 2020 Booker Prize receives £50,000 and can expect international recognition.

The 2019 Booker Prize for Fiction was won jointly by *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood and *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo. In the week following the announcement, sales of *The Testaments* rose from 11,955 to 13,400 copies while *Girl, Woman, Other* sold 5,980 copies, more than double its lifetime sales up to that point and a 1,340% increase week on week. *Girl, Woman, Other* has now spent 25 weeks in *The Sunday Times* Top Ten in hardback and paperback, several at number one and its combined sales in all editions and formats are heading towards half a million. The book will be published in 32 territories internationally and TV rights have been optioned by Potboiler. After its Booker win it was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction and won the best fiction book at the 2020 British Book Awards, while Evaristo picked up Author of the Year.

### The leading prize for quality fiction in English

First awarded in 1969, The Booker Prize is recognised as the leading prize for literary fiction written in English. The list of former winners features many of the literary giants of the last five decades: from Iris Murdoch to Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan to Hilary Mantel.

The rules of the prize were changed at the end of 2013 to embrace the English language 'in all its vigour, its vitality, its versatility and its glory', opening it up to writers beyond the UK and Commonwealth, providing they were writing novels in English and published in the UK.

The Booker Prize is supported by Crankstart, a charitable foundation.

### Longlisted books: judges' comments

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*The New Wilderness* by Diane Cook

"Wonderfully imagined and written, this is a tense future-shock novel that's also a tender exploration of a mother-daughter relationship under extreme pressure."

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*This Mournable Body* by Tsitsi Dangarembga

"This Mournable Body drew an immediate reaction like a sharp intake of breath from all of us on the panel. The breakdown of the protagonist and the breakdown of a country are inextricably linked in this arresting novel from a mercurial writer."

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*Burnt Sugar* by Avni Doshi

“This utterly compelling read examines a complex and unusual mother-daughter relationship with honest, unflinching realism - sometimes emotionally wrenching but also cathartic, written with poignancy and memorability.”

\*

*Who They Was* by Gabriel Krauze

"Magnificent in its relentless intensity and searing honesty, this is a new voice arriving fully formed and raring to go."

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*The Mirror & The Light* by Hilary Mantel

“*The Mirror and the Light* completes a tragic arc in which Thomas Cromwell is finally brought down by the police state he designed. Mantel’s masterful exhibition of sly dialogue and exquisite description brings the Tudor world alive.”

\*

*Apeirogon* by Colum McCann

“Apeirogon is both a gripping novel about two bereaved parents and a moving reflection on what it might mean to make peace between two warring sides.”

\*

*The Shadow King* by Maaza Mengiste

“*The Shadow King* is a meticulously researched and lyrical novel, a beautifully constructed historical fiction of women in war. We were drawn into the story of Hirut, the lead character who has, until now, never been heard. It is a brave, noble, gripping book that would not have been written at any other point in history.”

\*

*Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid

“Insightful about so many issues – particularly inter-racial relations, privilege, wealth – and rooted in the history of black women caring for white children, this is a gripping first novel, peopled by wholly believable and engaging characters.”

\*

*Real Life* by Brandon Taylor

“This debut is a fresh take on the age-old ‘campus novel’ tradition, providing a deeply painful, nuanced account of microaggressions, abuse, racism, homophobia, trauma, grief and alienation. We admired the vivid ways the book evokes daily, repetitive action as well as memory and fantasy to get at its profound central question: what is ‘real life’ anyway?”

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*Redhead by The Side of The Road* by Anne Tyler

“Anne Tyler’s beautifully written story unfolds a very human tale of redemption. Her benevolent eye makes even an unattractive character like Micah Mortimer a sympathetic protagonist.”

\*

*Shuggie Bain* by Douglas Stuart

“We were bowled-over by this first novel, which creates an amazingly intimate, compassionate, gripping portrait of addiction, courage and love. The book gives a vivid glimpse of a marginalized, impoverished community in a bygone era of British history. It’s a desperately sad, almost-hopeful examination of family and the destructive powers of desire.”

\*

*Love and Other Thought Experiments* by Sophie Ward

“This debut is an extremely original, genre-bending novel that melds Anglo-American analytical philosophy with realist social drama and futuristic science fiction, featuring travel across time, space and multiple dimensions. It’s a mind-expanding, bold, constantly surprising book, full of zest and a spirit of adventure; its intellectual verve is balanced by a deep human warmth, in the rich portrayal of two women, their son and an ever-changing world.”

\*

*How Much of These Hills is Gold* by C Pam Zhang

“The haunting and heartbreaking story of two immigrant children coping alone amid the fading leftovers of the Gold Rush in nineteenth century California.”

— Ends —

More information about the prize is available at:  
[www.thebookerprizes.com](http://www.thebookerprizes.com)

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## Notes to Editors

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- Longlisted book synopses, author biographies, author images and jacket images are available to download [here](#).
- The 2020 longlist consists of 13 books. The rules state that a longlist of 12 or 13 books - 'The Booker Dozen' - is to be selected, followed by a shortlist of six from which the winner is chosen. UK and Irish publishers may submit novels written in the English language and published in the UK or Ireland between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020. The number of books a publisher can submit will depend on that publisher's inclusion in longlists over the previous five years, as follows:
  - Publishers with no longlistings - 1 submission
  - Publishers with 1 or 2 longlisting(s) - 2 submissions
  - Publishers with 3 or 4 longlistings - 3 submissions
  - Publishers with 5 or more longlistings - 4 submissions

This means that the number of submissions for each publisher may change from year to year. A new work by any author who has previously been shortlisted for The Booker Prize (pre-2002 or post-2018) or Man Booker Prize (2002-2018) is automatically eligible.

In addition, the judges 'call-in' a number of novels each year: in addition to their main submission(s), a publisher may provide a list of up to five titles for consideration, accompanied by a justification from the editor. The judges are required to call-in no fewer than eight and no more than 12 of these titles. The judges are also permitted to call-in other books published within the requisite dates, even if the book has not been submitted through any other route.

Novels published in Ireland have been eligible since 2018.

- The Booker Prize for Fiction was first awarded in 1969. It was called The Man Booker Prize for Fiction when sponsored by Man Group from 2002 - 2018.
- The International Booker Prize is awarded annually for the best single work of fiction translated into English and published in the UK. It was known as the Man Booker International Prize when sponsored by Man Group. The £50,000 prize is divided equally between the author and the translator. Each shortlisted author and translator receives

£1,000. The 2019 winner was *Celestial Bodies* written by Jokha Alharthi and translated by Marilyn Booth. The 2020 judging panel is chaired by Ted Hodgkinson, Head of Literature and Spoken Word at Southbank Centre, and also consists of: comparative literature and translation specialist Lucie Campos; Man Booker International winning translator and writer Jennifer Croft; writer Valeria Luiselli; and Man Booker shortlisted writer and musician Jeet Thayil. The 2020 winner will be announced on 26 August. For information on the 2020 shortlist visit the website: [www.thebookerprizes.com](http://www.thebookerprizes.com)

- For a full history of the prize including previous winners, shortlisted authors and judges visit the website: [www.thebookerprizes.com](http://www.thebookerprizes.com)
- The Booker Prize Foundation is a registered charity (no 1090049) established in 2002. It is responsible for the award of The Booker Prize for Fiction and for the International Booker Prize. The trustees of the Booker Prize Foundation are: Mark Damazer (chair) - freelance journalist and former broadcast executive; Nick Barley - director of Edinburgh International Book Festival; Bidisha SK Mamata - writer, critic and broadcaster; Carol Lake - managing director, Philanthropy Executive at JPMorgan Chase; James Naughtie - broadcaster; Ben Okri - poet and author; Professor Louise Richardson - vice chancellor of the University of Oxford; The Rt Hon. Lord David Willetts - writer, ex-minister and advocate of fairness between the generations.
- The Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee, which advises on any changes to the rules and on the selection of the judges, represents all aspects of the book world. Its members are: Nic Bottomley - co-founder, Mr B's Emporium of Reading Delights; Jamie Byng - publisher, Canongate Books; Jonty Claypole - head of arts, BBC; James Daunt - managing director of Waterstones; Jonathan Douglas - director of the National Literacy Trust; Adam Freudenheim - publisher, Pushkin Press; Daniel Hahn - writer and translator; Peter Kemp - chief fiction reviewer, The Sunday Times; Sharmaine Lovegrove - publisher, Dialogue Books; Emma Paterson - agent, Aitken Alexander Associates; Fiammetta Rocco - senior editor and culture correspondent, *The Economist* and *1843* and The International Booker Prize Administrator; Michal Shavit - publishing director, Jonathan Cape; Eve Smith - Secretary, The Booker Prize Foundation; Boyd Tonkin - writer and critic; Helen Williams - Legal Counsel of Booker Group plc. It is chaired by Gaby Wood - Literary Director, The Booker Prize Foundation.
- Crankstart, a charitable foundation, is the exclusive funder of The Booker Prize and the International Booker Prize.
- The Literary Director of the Booker Prize Foundation is Gaby Wood. The Administrator of the International Booker Prize is Fiammetta Rocco, culture correspondent of *The Economist* and *1843*.
- Four Culture handles PR, comms and event management for the prizes and provides all events and administrative back-up.
- Booker Group is the UK's leading food & drink wholesaler with branches nationwide and a delivery network. It serves over 400,000 catering customers and 100,000 independent retailers.
- The Booker Prize Foundation has a longstanding partnership with RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People). The Foundation funds the production of the shortlisted titles in braille, giant print and audio, which the RNIB produces by the date the winner is

announced. The accessible versions are then made available to the tens of thousands of blind and partially sighted members of the RNIB Library. People with sight loss have a limited choice of books in accessible formats and often have to wait much longer than their sighted peers for titles to be made available to them - and there are many more books that they will never have the chance to read. The Foundation is working with RNIB to change this story. For further information contact the RNIB PR Team on 020 7391 2223 or [pressoffice@rnib.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@rnib.org.uk)

- The Booker Prize Foundation has partnered with the National Literacy Trust since 2012 to deliver Books Unlocked. The Foundation funds the programme, which has transformed the lives of prisoners and young offenders in the UK by helping them develop a love of reading. Prisoners are able to engage with high-quality writing as copies of Booker Prize shortlisted titles are sent out to prison reading groups. These same titles are also serialised as audiobooks on National Prison Radio, which is broadcast into c.80,000 cells, enabling still more prisoners to experience these exceptional stories. Authors go into prisons to discuss their writing directly with reading groups and many also record interviews on National Prison Radio. The shared vision for Books Unlocked is to bring about positive change in prisoners' life chances. Since 1993, the National Literacy Trust has led the campaign to transform the future of the UK's most disadvantaged young people by improving their literacy levels: [literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/books-unlocked/](https://literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/books-unlocked/)
- The Booker Prize Archive was given on loan in 2003 to Oxford Brookes University, where it now resides.

Four Culture  
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