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Editorial

The November edition of TLM comes complete with winter weather outside. Fortunately as you read this you are (I hope) safe and warm indoors, possibly even inside your library! This newsletter we have a look at the Essen Games Fair (courtesy of Julie Musslewhite), the T.S. Eliot Prize and related A-Level student competition gets a slightly late look in – it may be possible to encourage students to take part this year but it is something to keep in mind for 2009. The Teenage Book Prize for 2008 has been decided, as has the Catalyst Book Award. Classical Comics is making freely available via download, information on the Shakespeare plays for what was going to be the 2009 Year 9 SATS. This month's Eight Questions With... interview is with Craig Simpson.

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A visit to the Essen Games Fair

On Saturday 25th October I attended the Essen games fair in Germany. This is the world's biggest consumer fair for gaming - I heard somebody say there were 150,000 people attending over the 4 day convention. There were 9 large halls exhibiting all kinds of games; mainly board games, but also Nintendo DS, Live Action Role Playing (larping) and Cosplay. This was a chance for games publishers to show off their games, for exhibitors to try new games and for new games and editions to be launched.

This was my first time at the convention, and I was amazed at the scale of the event. Germans take their games very seriously, and there was a huge array of people there from families to people dressed as Klingons to teenagers to the more traditional board game geeks (I'm not going to say which category I fitted into!)

One of the first things we did when we got there was started playing a board game – entirely in German, but thankfully

explained to us in English by a helpful salesman. We were there for over 30 minutes trying to master the game, which was a Swiss mining game that we ended up buying. I came away from the convention with around 30 new games (most bought by my partner), including my new favourites Wasabi (in which you have to create sushi recipes using tiles on a board) and Keltis, which is the Spiel des Jahres (game of the year) for 2008.



As part of Essen, Comic Action 2008 was launched as a tie-in fair. There were thousands of comics for sale in a variety of European languages, as well as cosplay performances (although the crowds for these were always too large for me to get too close, and of course they were in German).



Overall, this was a fantastic experience. I was amazed at the scale of the event, and the passion everyone had for games, which was heartening especially in an era where families tend to spend their evenings focussing on separate, often technology-based, activities. It's an annual event, and was only around £10 for a day's entry, so I would recommend anyone going to this next year if you can.

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The T S Eliot Prize

The T S Eliot Prize for Poetry was inaugurated in 1993 to celebrate the Poetry Book Society's 40th birthday, and to honour its founding poet. Now in its sixteenth year, the T S Eliot Prize is the 'world's top poetry award' (the Irish Independent). It is now firmly established as the UK's most prestigious award for a new collection of poetry with a prize of £15,000 for the winner and a further £1,000 for each of the shortlisted poets.

Previous winners (in chronological order) are: Ciaran Carson, Paul Muldoon, Mark Doty, Les Murray, Don Paterson, Ted Hughes, Hugo Williams, Michael Longley, Anne Carson, Alice Oswald, Don Paterson, George Szirtes, Carol Ann Duffy, Seamus Heaney and Sean O'Brien. This year's T S Eliot Prize judging panel comprises Lavinia Greenlaw and Tobias Hill, and is chaired by Andrew Motion in the final year of his laureateship.

The 10-strong shortlist will be announced on 30th October and the winner will be announced at the award ceremony on 12th January 2009. The T S Eliot Prize Readings will take place the previous evening in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre and tickets can be booked at www.southbankcentre.co.uk/literature-spoken-word or tel 0871 663 2500.

Now in its third year, the T S Eliot Prize Shadowing Scheme invites secondary school students to shadow the judging panel, this year chaired by Poet Laureate Andrew Motion with Lavinia Greenlaw and Tobias Hill.

Students will once again be invited to read, study and debate some of the best poetry published in 2008 as featured in the collections of the ten shortlisted poets. The Shadowing Scheme's first two years have proved a great success with students in many UK secondary schools taking part and reading the work of the shortlisted poets.

The Poetry Book Society's Shadowing Scheme, run in partnership with the English and Media Centre, through its

quarterly magazine for A Level students, emagazine, encourages teachers and students to read poetry outside the set-text lists. On 4th November, soon after the T S Eliot Prize shortlist is announced, three poems from each of the 10 shortlisted collections will be available to download from www.poetrybookshoponline.com. A teachers' guide will be provided at www.emagazine.org.uk from mid October, and students can take part in an online poll for their choice of winner.

As part of the Shadowing Scheme, the PBS and the English & Media Centre will also be running an:

A-LEVEL STUDENT COMPETITION

A-Level students are invited to enter our competition to write a 500-word rationale justifying their choice of winning poetry collection for the 2008 T S Eliot Prize. The winning student will receive:

- * tickets to the T S Eliot Prize Readings and the award ceremony in January, and accommodation if needed
- * signed copies of the winning book and the student's choice of winning book
- * the opportunity to meet the T S Eliot prize-winner
- * a year's subscription to emagazine
- * a year's PBS membership.

The winning rationale will be published both in the February issue of emagazine and on Guardian Online.

'Reading contemporary poetry was refreshing. It was a new experience to read and comment on virtually untouched poetry. This allowed me to form my own, unique ideas about the meaning behind the poems rather than being spoon-fed second-hand ones. At the Award Ceremony, I was very fortunate to meet Sophie Hannah, as well as plenty of the other glittering literati!' Holly Stevenson, last year's Shadowing Scheme winner

HOW TO ENTER

3 poems from each of the shortlisted collections will be available from www.poetrybookshoponline.com on 4th November. Copies of all the shortlisted titles can also be ordered through the website. The deadline for submitting competition entries and voting on the online poll is 8th December. The winner of the A-Level student competition will be announced at the award ceremony in London on 12th January 2009.

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The Booktrust Teenage Prize 2008

Patrick Ness has been awarded the Booktrust Teenage Prize 2008 for his novel *The Knife of Never Letting Go*. Ness received a cheque for £2,500 and a trophy at the awards ceremony in London.

The novel, published by Walker, tells the story of a dystopian world where women have been banished and all the men have been infected with a virus that enables everyone to hear each others' thoughts. Todd, the last boy remaining, and his friend Viola must escape the town, the mysterious men who are chasing them and the unremitting 'Noise'.

The Booktrust Teenage Prize was launched in 2003 to recognise and celebrate contemporary writing for teenagers. Booktrust administers the prize with the support of writers, publishers, teachers, parents and libraries. Publishers may enter works of fiction, including novels, collections of short stories and graphic novels. The Reading Agency is promoting the Booktrust Teenage Prize in libraries across the UK primarily through coordination with public and school library services.

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The Catalyst Book Awards 2008

the winner of the Catalyst Book Awards 2008, as voted for by North Lanarkshire school pupils, is 'Zenith' by Julie Bertagna.

Zenith, the incredible story of three teenagers making their own beginnings in the harshest of worlds was voted for by the area's third and fourth year pupils, as their favourite work of teenage contemporary fiction this year.

The Catalyst Book Awards, now in their fifth year, concluded with an awards ceremony at Motherwell Civil Centre this month where over 600 S3 and S4 pupils attended. Master of Ceremonies at this year's awards was last year's winner Anthony McGowan, author of *Henry Tumour*. Also attending the event were all the nominated authors who gave fantastic talks to the pupils. In addition, a question time, which was a lively affair, also took place. During this section the young audience put their questions to the authors, who also stayed behind at the conclusion of the event to sign books for pupils.

Attending the awards ceremony was Depute Provost Jim Robertson who said, "I was delighted to attend the event and

was thrilled to see so many young avid readers coming together and discussing their opinions on this year's finalists. This event has really captured the imagination of school pupils across the area and is growing year on year. Congratulations to everyone involved in delivering such a successful Catalyst Awards."

From a shortlist of four, 'Zenith' by Julie Bertagna was selected and on winning the award she said, "It's a thrill to win the Catalyst Book Award 2008 and fantastic to see so many teenagers reading and debating books with real passion. I was very moved by the deep connection young readers made with my book, Zenith, about a drowning world and flood refugees of the future, and I was honoured to be chosen as winner out of a shortlist of such great books.

"A special thanks to all the enthusiastic young people who read and debated the books and voted on the award, and to the teachers and librarians who make the Catalyst Award such a fantastic event for everyone involved. You are all really inspiring. The Catalyst Award is a brilliant catalyst for making sparks fly between teenagers and books."

The award was set up by The Catalyst Fiction Group to promote teenage fiction in North Lanarkshire's secondary schools and community libraries and encourage a higher level of teenagers reading for enjoyment.

The other shortlisted titles were *Abela: The Girl who saw Lions* by Berlie Doherty, *The Beast Within* by Catherine MacPhail and *From Where I Stand* by Tabitha Suzuma.

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Why did the skeleton never return his overdue library book?

He was too gutless!

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Classical Comics

Due to the phenomenal success of the downloads offered last year, Classical Comics is offering free downloadable resources for what were going to be the 2009 SATS.

As you know, there was a choice of two tests, each covering two set sections within a single play. For 2009, the plays were:

- Romeo and Juliet
- The Tempest

For each play, Classical Comics have provided the set sections in:

- Original Text
The full script for the set sections in comic book form.
- Plain Text
A plain English translation in comic book form.
- Quick Text
A simplified English translation - ideal for a quick understanding and for less-able readers.
- No Text
With empty word balloons - incredibly useful to demonstrate comprehension and for revision!

Each document gives a one-page overview of the entire play, a page introducing each section, and even an illustrated character list. What's more, they have also provided a free-to-download 21-page Teachers Resource book with activities on language, missing words, plot comprehension, an insult generator, colouring pages and even a word search.

These downloadable resources (including those for Much Ado about Nothing, The Tempest and Richard III are available here:

<http://tinyurl.com/5wahqd>

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Website News

The Teen Librarian website has been updated and is now run using the WordPress blogging and CMS program. The look and layout is also totally different. Any and all feedback is appreciated!

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Submissions

If anyone would like to submit an article or idea for inclusion in the newsletter, please send it to teenlibraryservice@gmail.com

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Subscription to TLM

Subscribing to TLM is free, just send an e-mail to: editor@teenlibrarian.co.uk and ask to be added to the mailing list.

Editor: Matthew Imrie

Contributors: Julie Musslewhite, Classical Comics, Nicola Cameron & Matthew Imrie

Special thanks to Craig Simpson for giving up his time to answer the eight questions.

Eight Questions with... Craig Simpson

Q1. What made you decide to write for Teenagers?

This was almost by accident. Before I was published I tried writing novels for both the children's/YA and adult market. When writing my first published book "Resistance" (Random House Children's Books) I didn't have a specific market in mind - I simply had a terrific story I wanted to tell and it just so happened that it was published as a teenage book. I think it actually appeals to older readers too, so it's a bit of a crossover book. From Resistance came the idea for my Special Operations Series and this was a conscious decision to write for the children's/teen market from the start.

Q2. How do you get into the heads of your characters?

While researching and planning the outline for my stories I put myself in the place of my protagonists - who are they, how do they think, how would they react, etc. My protagonists are inspired by 'real' people who displayed great courage as members of the Resistance during the Second World War - who I call extraordinary ordinary people. I set out to try and capture a little of their spirit.

Q3 Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more a hit or miss process?

I think the Teen market is diverse in both popular genres and types of story, so it's a difficult question to answer. Adventure & stories about secret agents are among those I think always have been and will remain popular (at least I hope they will!) so hopefully I'm on safe ground.

Q4 What is the most satisfying part of the writing process for you?

I'm going to cheat here and give you several answers. Firstly, there is the moment the story comes together on paper. Secondly, there are those truly exciting moments ... the first time I hold a printed copy of my book, or see it on the shelves in bookshops. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it's when someone tells me they love reading my books - and this isn't to feed my ego (honest!) but rather is the moment I know I've achieved what I set out to do - to entertain the reader.

Q5 Do you ever read the works of other Teen/YA authors? If yes what can you recommend?

Yes but I wish I had time to read more as there's a wealth of good stuff out there. I'm a huge fan of the late Robert Westall and of Philip Pullman. Mal Peet's "Tamar" is worth seeking out, as are books by Joseph Delaney (The Wardstone Chronicles) and books by Keith Gray (for example The Ostrich Boys or Malarkey).

Q6 Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

My books are set during the second world war and thankfully I'm not that old! They are, however, based or inspired by the real experiences and recollections of others though. And, in a way, elements of my own experiences do enter my writing. For example, in my Special Operations Series, my protagonist, Finn Gunnensen, and his friends frequently find themselves in foreign lands and unfamiliar places and, as I have travelled widely to these places, I can bring some of my own life experience to their situations.

Q7 What are you working on at the moment?

I've just completed all the editing for book two of the Special Operations series. It follows on from Special Operations: Dogfight, and sees Finn and his friends undergo their training as secret agents and then their first real operation into occupied France. It's quite a story, not least because it's inspired by real events, and what I think was one of the most audacious and jaw-dropping raids of the war. The book is called Special Operations: Death Ray, and will hit the bookshops in the first week of February 2009. And right now I'm settling down to write the third in the series which will have my Special Ops team heading off to Holland to sort out a right old mess!

Q8 Do you ever do Library visits to Teen Reading Groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with you or your agent about it?

Yes. I do talks both in schools and libraries (reading groups, dads and lads reading groups etc). I can speak both about becoming a writer, and also about the themes in my books and the 'true' stories

of breath-taking heroism that underpin them. I can be reached via email at cs@lymwriter.orangehome.co.uk or if you experience difficulties reaching me that way, you can contact the publicity department at my publisher - Random House Children's Books - and they'll pass your enquiry on.
