

Visitors to Hester's Way library help judge the Royal Society Young People's Book Prize

On Tuesday 30th August, Cheltenham Science Group asked visitors to Hester's Way library to help judge which book should win this year's Royal Society Young People's Book Prize.

Each year the Royal Society celebrates the best books that communicate science to young people through their Young People's Book Prize. The Prize aims to inspire young people to read about science and promotes the writing of excellent, accessible books for under-14s. A panel of expert adult judges chooses a shortlist of six books, announced each May, before the winner is chosen by groups of young people in judging panels across the UK.

Professor Robert Winston, a favourite at Cheltenham Science Festival, won the award in 2015 for his book "Utterly Amazing Science". This year's shortlist includes:

- "Lift-the-flap First Questions and Answers: How do flowers grow?" by Katie Daynes and illustrated by Christine Pym
- "Project body" by John Farndon
- "Rebel Science" by Dan Green and illustrated by David Lyttleton
- "The Usborne Official Astronaut's Handbook" by Louie Stowell and illustrated by Roger Simo
- "TreeTops inFact: How to Change the World" by Isabel Thomas and illustrated by Esme Lonsdale
- "How Machines Work" by David Macaulay



Olivia Watson, age 5, with the shortlisted books and the final results

Throughout the day, Sam Dear from Gloucestershire Libraries read out extracts from each book and then the visiting young people had an opportunity to look through the books themselves before rating each book according to how easy it was to read, its layout, interest and appeal.

Arabella, age 5, loved the layout of Katie Daynes book with all of the interactive flaps and brightly coloured flowers. Ariana, age 13, was interested in hearing how Mary Anning had 'changed the world' by studying dinosaur dung! Even Karan, age 16, joined in. She found the "Rebel Science" book particularly appealing and kept on flicking through the pages.

However, the overall winner today was "The Usborne Official Astronaut's Handbook" by Louie Stowell and illustrated by Roger Simo. After all, as it says in chapter one, "Who wouldn't want to float around in space, gazing back at our gorgeous blue planet, and zooming to work on a speeding rocket?" We will now submit our winner. Then we have to wait until November, once all of the judging panels have submitted their results, to see which book will win the £10,000 prize.

Kirsty Watson from Cheltenham Science Group said, "We really enjoyed working in partnership with Hester's Way library today. We are keen to open a permanent science centre in this area and have enjoyed engaging the local community with some fabulous new science books. It was great to see so many familiar faces following our successful pop-up science centre at the new Create on the Square venue in Coronation Square earlier in the summer holidays."

If your school or group would be interested in having a look at the books and giving us your opinion, please get in touch with Dave Watson (CheltSciGrp@gmail.com)