

Winning books take £10,000 and promise of huge surge in sales

Writer and social science lecturer David Bodanis has won the Royal Society's Aventis Prizes for Science Books General Prize, with his book **Electric Universe – How Electricity Switched on the Modern World**.

Bookmakers William Hill had quoted Bodanis as the second favourite (3/1) for the Aventis Prize, the world's most prestigious award for popular science writing.

Meanwhile, the Junior Prize was taken home by author Kate Petty, illustrator Jennie Maizels and paper engineer Corina Fletcher. A judging panel, chaired by the award-winning author and previous Children's Laureate, Anne Fine OBE, selected a shortlist of six titles before handing over the final judging decision to over a thousand young people in groups across the UK, who selected **The Global Garden** (*Eden Books*) as their favourite.

In **Electric Universe**, Bodanis takes the reader on a journey from the cold waters of the Atlantic to the streets of Hamburg during a World War II firestorm, following the tale of our discovery of electricity and its uses. The result is a synergy of insightful scientific account with tales of romance, inspiration, eccentricity and fraud.

Nick Ross, chair of this year's General Prize Judging Panel said: "This book is wonderfully accessible – it's a huge canvas but it reads like a novel, with twists and turns that would make a fiction writer happy to have been so inventive, and opens up a universe of facts that would scarcely be credible in an imaginary tale. It's simply a very good read and if you have little or no interest in electricity, after reading this you will have."

The Global Garden helps children to explore their natural world and discover the origins of products that we all use on a daily basis. Friendly bees and moles help the intrepid reader to negotiate the secret flaps, levers and windows that reveal where jeans grow, what a bicycle plant looks like, and how photosynthesis occurs. The book encourages younger readers to engage with environmental issues from an early age, and to consider the impact that their little home has on the wider global garden.

Anne Fine added; "**The Global Garden** is a super read. It really is a beautifully put-together book: well-written and fact-filled as well as entertaining and engaging. Kate and Jennie were able to understand exactly what the young readers wanted out of a science book."

The shortlisted books for the Royal Society's Aventis Prizes for science writing were as follows:

GENERAL:

Electric Universe – How Electricity Switched on the Modern World – David Bodanis (*Little, Brown Book Group*)

Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive – Jared Diamond (*Penguin, Allen Lane*)

Parallel Worlds – The Science of Alternative Universes and our Future in the Cosmos – Michio Kaku (*Penguin*)

Power, Sex, Suicide – Mitochondria and the Meaning of Life – Nick Lane (*Oxford University Press*)

Empire of the Stars – Friendship, Obsession and Betrayal in the Quest for Black Holes – Arthur I. Miller (*Little, Brown Book Group*)

The Truth About Hormones – What's Going on when we're Tetchy, Spotty, Fearful, Tearful or Just Plain Awful – Vivienne Parry (*Atlantic Books*)

JUNIOR:

100 Science Experiments – Georgina Andrews and Kate Knighton (*Usborne Publishing*)

Think of a Number – Johnny Ball (*Dorling Kindersley*)

It's True! Squids Suck – Nicki Greenberg (*Allen and Unwin*)

Blame My Brain – Nicola Morgan (*Walker Books*)

Global Garden – Kate Petty, Jennie Maizels and Corina Fletcher (*Eden Project*)

Kingfisher Knowledge: Forensics – Richard Platt (*Kingfisher Publications*)

Judges were selected from a range of disciplines from broadcasting to academia, and were as follows:

General Prize:

Nick Ross, broadcaster, journalist and Member of Academy of Medical Sciences (**chair**)

Johnny Ball, popular science writer and television presenter

Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics, winner of 1994 Aventis Prize and 1997 Michael Faraday Award

Anjula Mutanda, consultant TV psychiatrist and Agony Aunt

Fiammetta Rocco, Economist literary editor and award-winning journalist

Junior Prize:

Anne Fine, Writer and Children's Laureate 2001 – 2003 (**chair**)

Carolin Crawford, Astronomer and Royal Society Research Fellow

Tim Hunt, 2001 Nobel Prize Winner in Physiology or Medicine

Anita Kapila, Teacher, Burnham Upper School, Buckinghamshire

Reem Nours, Head of News, Factual and Learning for BBC Children

Previous winners of the Royal Society's Aventis Prizes for Science Books General Prize have included **Stephen Hawking**, **Robert Kunzig**, **Stephen Jay Gould** and **Bill Bryson**. Last year **Philip Ball**'s 'Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another' was chosen from a shortlist that included books by **Robert Winston** and **Richard Dawkins**.

The Aventis Prizes for Science Books were established eighteen years ago to celebrate, reward and draw attention to the fantastic popular science writing available to inspire both children and adults.

The Prizes are managed by the Royal Society, the UK national academy of science and generously supported by the Aventis Foundation, a German charitable trust established by a predecessor of sanofi-aventis, a world leader in pharmaceuticals.

For more information on the Aventis Prizes for Science Books please visit the website at www.sciencebookprize.comhttp://www.aventisprizes.com/