

21 April 2004

## ROBOTS AND REVOLTING EXPERIMENTS DRIVE UNPRECEDENTED SALES IN POPULAR SCIENCE BOOKS

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

The recent spectacular increase in sales of children's books continues, bringing with it an unprecedented interest in popular science writing amongst the young.

According to Book Marketing Limited's (BML) *Books and the Consumer* survey, consumers purchased 2.7m books classified as children's science\*, spending £12m in 2003, amounting to an astonishing twelve per cent of non fiction sales, dwarfing sales of children's books on sport.

These findings are reflected by the experience of the Royal Society, which has noticed a welcome increase in entries for the prestigious Aventis Prizes, the international award for science writing. On 21 April 2004, the five-strong judging panel led by CBBC presenter, Kate Heavenor, announced the shortlist with the final shoot-out being between themes as diverse as revolutionary robots, ghastly experiments and space travel.

The shortlisted books for the Junior Prize are:

- **The Beginning: Voyages Through Time** By Peter Ackroyd (*Dorling Kindersley*)
- **Really Rotten Experiments** By Nick Arnold & Tony De Saulles (*Scholastic Children's Books*)
- **Riotous Robots** By Mike Goldsmith (*Scholastic Children's Books*)
- **Start Science: Forces and Motion** By Sally Hewitt (*Chrysalis Children's Books*)
- **Tell Me: Who Lives In Space?** By Clare Oliver (*Chrysalis Children's Books*)
- **Survivors Science: In The Rainforest** By Peter Riley (*Hodder Wayland*)

**Abdul-Hayee Murshad, Junior Prize judge and head teacher of Hermitage Primary School in London comments:** “Science books for children are every bit as fascinating as fiction and it is evident that we are starting to see an increase in popularity in these titles in the classroom. As we move away from the traditional science book, children have become more open to learning about science as it becomes a more fun and interactive subject. When it comes to science and technology, children have the ability to be more advanced than some adults, and these books give children the upper hand by communicating important scientific issues in a creative yet informative manner.”

600 Children up to the age of 14 from SciZmic, the national network of 65 science clubs from Orkney to Cornwall, will now have the daunting task of reading and judging each of the shortlisted entries before selecting a winner. Announced at the Aventis Prizes award ceremony on the 14 June 2004, the winning author will receive £10,000 whilst £1,000 will be awarded to each of the shortlisted authors.

**Stephen Cox, Executive Secretary at The Royal Society comments:** “Now in their sixteenth year, the Aventis Prizes continue to go from strength to strength. This year, we are delighted to see a record number of entries, for the prizes, which truly reflects the demand for well written and illustrated science books. The Aventis Prizes are committed to encouraging the writing, publishing and reading of good and accessible popular science books and we are delighted that this is reflected so well in the Junior shortlist.”

The judges for the Junior Prize 2004 Aventis Prizes For Science Books are:

- **Kate Heavenor**, CBBC presenter (chair)
- **Jacqueline Wilson**, children’s author
- **Professor Heinz Wolff**, television presenter and Professor of Bioengineering at Brunel University
- **Abdul-Hayee Murshad**, head teacher of Hermitage Primary School, London
- **Mark Evans**, veterinarian and television presenter on BBC and Discovery

Previous winners for Junior Prize include Dr. Frances Dipper for her book, *DK Guide to the Oceans* (Dorling Kindersley - 2003), *DK Guide to the Human Body*

by Richard Walker (Dorling Kindersley - 2002) and 2004 shortlist nominee, Nick Arnold for *Blood Bones and Body Bits* from his *Horrible Science Series* (Scholastic - 1997).

The Aventis 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 Aventis, a world leader in pharmaceuticals.

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#### **Notes to Editors**

\* 'Children's science' includes: science, technology, computing, transport, space, natural history, geography, environment [Source: Books and the Consumer, © BML/TNS].

The survey involves fortnightly interviews throughout the year with a nationally representative panel of people aged 12-74, who record details of the books they have bought

\*\* An estimated 22 million non-fiction books for children were sold in the UK in 2003 [Source: Books and the Consumer, © BML/TNS]

\*\*\* For a full list of SciZmic clubs taking part, logon to [www.aventisprizes.com](http://www.aventisprizes.com)

#### **About The Royal Society**

The Royal Society is an independent academy promoting the natural and applied sciences. Founded in 1660, the Society has three roles, as the UK academy of science, as a learned Society and as a funding agency. It responds to individual demand with selection by merit not by field. The Society's aims are to:

- strengthen UK science by providing support to excellent individuals
- fund excellent research to push back the frontiers of knowledge
- attract and retain the best scientists
- ensure the UK engages with the best science around the world
- support science communication and education; and communicate and encourage dialogue with the public
- provide the best independent advice nationally and internationally
- promote scholarship and encourage research into the history of science
- For more information, visit the web site at [www.royalsoc.ac.uk](http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk)

#### **About The Aventis Foundation**

The Aventis Foundation is generously supporting the Aventis Prizes for Science Books.

The Aventis Foundation ([www.aventis-foundation.org](http://www.aventis-foundation.org)) is a German charitable trust established by Aventis, a world leader in pharmaceuticals. The Aventis Foundation serves to promote music, theatre, art and literature, projects in the social and political arena with a focus on healthcare, as well as science, research and higher education. It was established in 1996 as the Hoechst Foundation and was renamed the Aventis Foundation in 2000, following the merger of Hoechst, its founder, with Rhône-Poulenc which created Aventis. Aventis is a global pharmaceutical company that discovers, develops, markets and manufactures branded prescription drugs and human vaccines to protect and improve the quality of life of patients around the world. For more information visit the website at [www.aventis-foundation.org](http://www.aventis-foundation.org) and [www.aventis.co.uk](http://www.aventis.co.uk)

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