



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## 8<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MASSACHUSETTS BOOK AWARDS ANNOUNCED

**12 Books of Fiction Nonfiction, Poetry & Children's Literature Honored;**  
*Year-Long Reading Promotion for Award Books Launched*

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Massachusetts Book Awards have been announced by the Massachusetts Center for the Book, which administers the program.

Twelve outstanding books written by Massachusetts authors and/or about important Commonwealth themes have been selected for awards and honors notices. These books will now be highlighted during a year-long reading promotion initiative in Massachusetts libraries and, increasingly, bookstores.

The **Fiction Award** goes to *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, written by MIT Writing Professor Junot Diaz (Cambridge). This wonderful novel of the immigrant experience comprises, as well, a driving expose of the travails of the Dominican Republic under the dictatorship of Trujillo. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award, *Oscar Wao* helps us to understand the experiences brought to Massachusetts by our newest residents.

**Fiction Honors** go to *The Air We Breathe* by Andrea Barrett (North Adams) and *Like You'd Understand Anyway* by Jim Shepard (Williamstown), a novel and a collection of short stories, respectively, that come to us from our commonwealth's northwest territory, the upper Berkshires.

In **Nonfiction** the **Award** book is *Salem Witch Judge* by Eve LaPlante (Brookline), which depicts the career of Samuel Sewell, the only judge to repent publicly his involvement in the witch trials. Sewell, a distant relation to LaPlante, went on to argue for the rights of Native Americans, for the abolition of slavery and for equal rights for women ... all of this in 1600s Massachusetts.

**Nonfiction Honors** go to Eric Jay Dolin (Marblehead) for his history of whaling in North America, *Leviathan*, and to John Matteson, for *Eden's Outcasts*, a study of the Alcott family, especially of father and daughter Bronson and Louisa May.

The **Award in Poetry** goes to *Blackbird and Wolf* by Henri Cole (Boston/South End), a collection of "difficult beauty." It is joined in **Honors** by *Gulf Music*, the most recent collection -- one that explores the intersections of individual with cultural, and political memory -- from former Poet Laureate and founder of the Favorite Poem Project, Robert Pinsky (Cambridge), and by Moira Linehan's (Winchester) *If No Moon*, a cohesive and brave collection of lyric poetry.

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For Younger Readers, the **Award** book is *Whale Port*, by Mark Foster (Somerville) and Gerald Foster (Lincoln), an intricate exploration in word and illustration of one town through the lens of its changing relationship with whales.

**Honors** in the Children's/Young Adult category go to *The Lemonade War* by Jacqueline Davies (Needham), a novel for upper elementary and middle school readers that explores the value of self-estimation and of family, and *Bravo Zulu, Samantha!* by Kathleen Benner Duple (Needham), a novel of intergenerational relationships that also provides its readers with some women's aviation history.

The Judges for this year's awards represent a broad spectrum of the Massachusetts book community, from librarians and editors to booksellers and teachers of writing: Vickie Beene-Beavers, Youth Services, Southeast Mass. Regional Library System; Claire A. Buck, Professor, Wheaton College (Norton); Katherine Dibble (Roslindale), Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners & Women's National Book Association/Boston Chapter; Lorraine Dagostino, Professor, UMass Lowell; Lisa Gagnon, Harvard Public Library; Michael Kenney (Cambridge), *The Boston Globe* and the interactive *Literary Tour of Boston* (boston.com); Shaun O'Connell, Professor, U Mass Boston, author of *Imagining Boston*; Mimi Powell, Baker's Books (Dartmouth); Lawrence Raab, poet and Professor, Williams College (Williamstown) and poet; Barry O'Connell, Professor, Amherst College (Amherst); Meg Richardson, The Book Rack (Newburyport); and Vanessa Vargas, Forbes Library (Northampton).

The Massachusetts Book Awards is a program of the Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB), the Commonwealth Affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, emerging from a partnership among the Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, and Simmons College Graduate School of Library & Information Sciences. It also receives organizational support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The Massachusetts Library Association is a programming partner for the annual book awards.

The Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB) works with the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and within a network of state-center affiliates operating in every state and in the District of Columbia to promote books, reading, literacy, and libraries. You can read more about the Book Awards and about the other programs of the Center – most particularly the new Literary Map of Massachusetts, *Letters about Literature*, the Mother Goose Asks, “Why?” family literacy project, and the National Book Festival -- at [www.massbook.org](http://www.massbook.org)

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