



Aurealis Awards 2007: judges' report

young adult

panel members

Angela Slatter (convenor), Alex Adsett, Dianne de Bellis, Karen Miller, Gillian Polack

judging criteria

The panel looked for originality with engagement and significant contribution to the genre. We particularly valued technical skill and clarity with language, plotting and pacing. The nominated works needed to continually engage the reader's interest and have content appropriate to the YA category. The books and stories on the shortlists showed convincing characterisations and sense of place with solid and consistent world-building. Several books were the second or third part of a series, but we found that the stories were able to stand on their own.

novel short list

Anthony Eaton, *Skyfall*, UQP **WINNER**
Kate Constable, *Taste of Lightning*, Allen & Unwin
Juliet Marillier, *Cybele's Secret*, Pan Macmillan
Michael Pryor, *Heart of Gold*, Random House
Scott Westerfeld, *Extras*, Simon Pulse

review of short list

The panel loved *Skyfall* by Anthony Eaton. It was beautifully written, emotionally engaging and wonderfully thought-provoking without being didactic. It portrayed great tension and human relationships, with no stark black and white, simplistic solutions. The speculative fiction elements are undisputable and it was a consistently built world. The projection into the future of the consequences of climate mis-management brings a contemporary flavour. The characters are interesting with timeless concerns of family, relationships and growing up. The images of the built world are terrifying and beautiful.

The Taste of Lightning by Kate Constable was enormously readable and wonderfully entertaining, with lots of engaging action and characters to cheer for and boo against. It was thoroughly enjoyable with excellent usage of speculative fiction elements. The differences in the backgrounds, personalities and motivations of Tansy, Perrin and Skir are used to good effect in the story of their journey. The tension and dilemmas created by these differences are what makes this such an enjoyable read.



Cybele's Secret by Juliet Marillier was enjoyable because of the depth of the world that Marillier has created. There is a satisfying mix of history and magic that appeals to a modern sensibility. The central character is accessible and likeable and the reader is swept along with her growing understanding of her world and her developing maturity. She is on a journey that is at the same time familiar and exotic.

Heart of Gold by Michael Pryor is a wonderfully entertaining romp that leaves the reader exhilarated. There is no doubt this is a work of speculative fiction, and those elements have been imaginatively incorporated.

Extras by Scott Westerfeld has a strong fast narrative with a simple created world and an ending that would please most readers. The pace is so good and the ideas so enthusiastic that they carry the reader through. It could easily be called *Facebook: the novel*. The ideas are sharp, funny and thoroughly contemporary. Complex shifting relationships are captured in a world where privacy and notoriety are completely different concepts. While this might send chills through an older generation, the concepts and ideas are well positioned in the domain of young adult readers.

short story short list

Deborah Biancotti, *A Scar for Leida* *Fantastic Wonder Stories*, Ticonderoga **WINNER**
 Shane Jiraiya Cummings, *Yamabushi Kaidan and the Smoke Dragon* *Fantastic Wonder Stories*, Ticonderoga
 Garth Nix, *Holly and Iron* *Dark Alchemy*, Allen & Unwin
 Garth Nix, *Bad Luck, Trouble, Death and Vampire Sex* *Eclipse # 1*
 Tracey Rolfe, *Cast Off* *Fantastic Wonder Stories*, Ticonderoga

review of short list

A Scar for Leida by Deborah Biancotti is beautifully written, moving and darkly imaginative. This is a sits-in-the-back-of-your-mind kind of story that doesn't want to leave. The complexities of love, deceit, revenge and the consequences are laid out for the reader.

Yamabushi Kaidan and the Smoke Dragon by Shane Jiraiya Cummings is an imaginative and engaging short that could easily push out into a novel. The world-building is fresh and convincingly detailed and the cultural aspects are clearly described without being intrusive; the story moves along with a stylish pace.

Holly and Iron by Garth Nix provides a rich and fascinating alternative view of England as it slowly transformed from Saxon to Norman rule . . . and from Saxon to Norman magic.

Bad Luck, Trouble, Death and Vampire Sex by Garth Nix is fast-paced subversion of the teenage wizard genre . . . Harry Potter with bite, attitude, bad language and a green thumb!

Cast Off by Tracey Rolfe is an original and fascinating study of isolation, exile and revenge. The characters are well-drawn, convincing and sympathetic.