



## *Lincoln in the Bardo* wins 2017 Man Booker Prize

- Acclaimed short story writer George Saunders wins with his first full-length novel
- ‘. . . stands head and shoulders above most contemporary fiction’ – *the Guardian*

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

#FinestFiction

*Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders is tonight, Tuesday 17 October, named winner of the 2017 Man Booker Prize for Fiction. *Lincoln in the Bardo* is the first full-length novel from George Saunders, internationally renowned short story writer.

The 58-year-old New York resident, born in Texas, is the second American author to win the prize in its 49-year history. He was in contention for the prize with two British, one British-Pakistani and two American writers.

Lola, Baroness Young, 2017 Chair of judges, comments:

‘The form and style of this utterly original novel, reveals a witty, intelligent, and deeply moving narrative. This tale of the haunting and haunted souls in the afterlife of Abraham Lincoln’s young son paradoxically creates a vivid and lively evocation of the characters that populate this other world. *Lincoln in the Bardo* is both rooted in, and plays with history, and explores the meaning and experience of empathy.’

*Lincoln in the Bardo* focuses on a single night in the life of Abraham Lincoln: an actual moment in 1862 when the body of his 11-year-old son was laid to rest in a Washington cemetery. Strangely and brilliantly, Saunders activates this graveyard with the spirits of its dead. *The Independent* described the novel as ‘completely beguiling’, praising Saunders for concocting a ‘narrative like no other: a magical, mystery tour of the bardo – the “intermediate” or transitional state between one’s death and one’s next birth, according to Tibetan Buddhism.’ Meanwhile, the *Guardian* wrote that, ‘the short story master’s first novel is a tale of great formal daring . . . . [it] stands head and shoulders above most contemporary fiction, showing

a writer who is expanding his universe outwards, and who clearly has many more pleasures to offer his readers.'

Saunders told *TIME* magazine that he didn't really want to write about Lincoln, 'but was so captivated by this story I'd heard years ago about him entering his son's crypt. I thought of the book as a way of trying to instil the same reaction I'd had all those years ago.'

*Lincoln in the Bardo* is published by Bloomsbury, making it the third consecutive year the prize has been won by an independent publisher, following Oneworld Publications' success in 2015 with Marlon James and 2016 with Paul Beatty. Bloomsbury has won the prize three times before, with Howard Jacobson (2010), Margaret Atwood (2000) and Michael Ondaatje (1992).

Saunders' win comes in the month that 1989 Booker Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro was named as this year's Nobel Prize in Literature recipient. Ishiguro follows in the footsteps of other Booker Prize-recognised authors who have gone on to win the award including: V. S. Naipaul, Nadine Gordimer, William Golding, J. M. Coetzee and Doris Lessing.

Luke Ellis, CEO of Man Group, comments:

'We are pleased to congratulate George Saunders, along with each of the shortlisted authors, for his fantastic achievement this year. At Man Group, we are extremely proud to be sponsoring the world's foremost literary prize and celebrating exceptional literary talent for a fifteenth year. We understand the importance of intellectual capital and creative thought – and indeed, the ability to view the world from different lenses matters more than ever today, in this age of rapid and inexorable change. We also believe that businesses like ours have an important duty to advance progress in education at every level: from prizes like this, which recognise global talent, to the local grassroots initiatives championed by the Booker Prize Foundation and the Man Charitable Trust, which we are honoured to support.'

Lola, Baroness Young was joined on the 2017 judging panel by the literary critic, Lila Azam Zanganeh; the Man Booker Prize shortlisted novelist, Sarah Hall; the artist, Tom Phillips CBE RA; and the travel writer and novelist, Colin Thubron CBE. The judges considered 144 submissions for this year's prize.

George Saunders' win was announced by Lola Young at a dinner at London's Guildhall. He was presented with a trophy from HRH The Duchess of Cornwall and a £50,000 cheque by Luke Ellis, Chief Executive of Man Group. Saunders also receives a designer bound edition of his book and a further £2,500 for being shortlisted.

At the event, which was broadcast live on the BBC News Channel, actors Maxine Peake, Rhoshan Stone and Olivia Williams, read extracts from the shortlisted books. All the shortlisted authors attended alongside a number of former winners.

George Saunders will take part in his first official public event as winner at a *New Statesman*-partnered event at Foyles Charing Cross Road on Thursday 19 October 2017. Tickets can be bought [here](#).

Royal Mail is again issuing a congratulatory postmark featuring the winner's name, which will be applied to millions of items of stamped mail nationwide on Wednesday 18 October and Friday 20 October 2017. It will say 'Congratulations to George Saunders, winner of the 2017 Man Booker Prize'.

On winning the Man Booker Prize, an author can expect international recognition, plus a dramatic increase in book sales. In the week following the 2016 winner announcement, sales of *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty increased by 658%. To date over 360,000 print copies of the Oneworld edition have been sold, and 26 foreign language rights deals have been secured – 19 since his win.

Other recent winners have included Hilary Mantel (2012 and 2009), whose *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* have led to award-winning adaptations on stage and screen, Julian Barnes (2011), whose *The Sense of an Ending* was released as a film this year, and Marlon James' *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (2015), which has been optioned for a TV series by HBO. Further winning novels that have gone on to have second or third lives on stage, screen and radio include *Midnight's Children*, *Schindler's Ark* (directed by Steven Spielberg as *Schindler's List*), *The Remains of the Day* and *The English Patient*.

### The leading prize for quality fiction in English

First awarded in 1969, the Man Booker Prize is recognised as the leading award for high quality literary fiction written in English. Its list of winners includes many of the giants of the last four decades, from Salman Rushdie to Margaret Atwood, Iris Murdoch to JM Coetzee. The prize has also recognised many authors early in their careers, including Eleanor Catton, Aravind Adiga and Ben Okri.

Man Group, an active investment management firm, has sponsored the prize since 2002.

The rules of the prize were changed at the end of 2013 to embrace the English language 'in all its vigour, its vitality, its versatility and its glory', opening it up to writers beyond the UK and Commonwealth when their novels are published in UK.

To hear the most up-to-date news on this year's prize, listen to the Man Booker Prize Podcast series, or to learn more about the prize's history and share your thoughts online, please visit:

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

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## About the winning book and author

*Lincoln in the Bardo*

George Saunders

Published by Bloomsbury Publishing, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

### Synopsis

On 22 February 1862, two days after his death, Willie Lincoln is laid to rest in a marble crypt in a Georgetown cemetery. That very night, shattered by grief, his father Abraham arrives at the cemetery, alone, under cover of darkness.

Over the course of that evening, Abraham Lincoln paces the graveyard unsettled by the death of his beloved boy, and by the grim shadow of a war that feels as though it is without end. Meanwhile Willie is trapped in a state of limbo between the dead and the living – drawn to his father with whom he can no longer communicate, existing in a ghostly world populated by the recently passed and the long dead.

Unfolding in the graveyard over a single night, narrated by a dazzling chorus of voices, *Lincoln in the Bardo* is a thrilling exploration of death, grief and the deeper meaning and possibilities of life.

### Biography

George Saunders was born in 1958 and is the author of nine books, including *Tenth of December*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award and won the inaugural Folio Prize (for the best work of fiction in English) and the Story Prize (best short-story collection). He has received MacArthur and Guggenheim fellowships and the PEN/Malamud Prize for excellence in the short story, and was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2013, he was named one of the world's 100 most influential people by *Time* magazine. He teaches in the creative writing program at Syracuse University.

### Notes to Editors

- George Saunders is available for interview. To arrange please contact Ros Ellis at Bloomsbury: Tel: [ros.ellis@bloomsbury.com](mailto:ros.ellis@bloomsbury.com); Email: 02076315727
- The winner of the 2017 Man Booker Prize was chosen from 144 submissions. The 2017 shortlisted titles were:
  1. Paul Auster (US) – *4 3 2 1* (Faber & Faber)
  2. Emily Fridlund (US) – *History of Wolves* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson)
  3. Mohsin Hamid (UK- Pakistan) – *Exit West* (Hamish Hamilton)
  4. Fiona Mozley (UK) – *Elmet* (JM Originals)
  5. George Saunders (US) – *Lincoln in the Bardo* (Bloomsbury Publishing, Bloomsbury)
  6. Ali Smith (UK) – *Autumn* (Hamish Hamilton)
- The special designer bound edition of the book was created by Tom McEwan, a Fellow of the UK's principal bookbinding society, Designer Bookbinders

- Please find images of the winning author and jacket [here](#). This Dropbox will be updated on Wednesday morning with images of the winner dinner and press conference.
- UK publishers may submit novels written in the English language and published in the UK between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2017. The number of books a publisher can submit will depend on that publisher's inclusion in longlists over the previous five years, as follows:
  - Publishers with no longlistings – 1 submission
  - Publishers with 1 or 2 longlisting(s) – 2 submissions
  - Publishers with 3 or 4 longlistings – 3 submissions
  - Publishers with 5 or more longlistings – 4 submissions

This means that the number of submissions for each publisher may change from year to year. A new work by any author who has previously been shortlisted for the Booker (pre-2002) or Man Booker Prize is automatically eligible

In addition, the judges 'call in' a number of novels each year: in addition to their main submissions, a publisher may provide a list of up to five titles for consideration, accompanied by a justification from the editor. The judges are required to call in no fewer than eight and no more than 12 of these titles. The judges are also permitted to call in other books published within the requisite dates, even if the book has not been entered through any other route

- Four Colman Getty handles PR and event management for the prize and provides all events and administrative back-up
- The Literary Director of the Booker Prize Foundation is Gaby Wood. The Administrator of the Man Booker International Prize is Fiammetta Rocco – Culture Editor of The Economist and 1843
- Paul Beatty won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction 2016 with *The Sellout* (Oneworld). To date, over 360,000 copies of the Oneworld edition of the book have been sold.
- The Man Booker Prize for Fiction was first awarded in 1969 and has been sponsored by Man Group since 2002. The title 'Booker Prize' therefore only applies to prize years 1969 – 2001, before Man Group's sponsorship began, and since 2002 it has been called The Man Booker Prize for Fiction. It would be greatly appreciated if you could ensure that your editorial is factually correct by referring to the prize's full title at least once, if not in the headline, then in your next subsequent mention. For a full history of the prize including previous winners, shortlisted authors and judges visit the website: [www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)
- The Man Booker International Prize is awarded annually for the best single work of fiction translated into English and published in the UK. The £50,000 prize is divided equally between the author and the translator. Each shortlisted author and translator receives £1,000. The 2017 winner was *A Horse Walks into a Bar* by David Grossman, translated by Jessica Cohen. 2017 was the second year of the newly evolved prize, which was originally established in 2005 as a biennial prize awarded to an author for an achievement in fiction
- The Booker Prize Foundation is a registered charity (no 1090049) established in 2002, since when it has been responsible for the award of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, and for the Man Booker International Prize since its inauguration in 2005. The trustees of the Booker Prize Foundation are: Baroness Kennedy QC (Chair) – former Chair of the British Council and Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford; Lord Baker of Dorking CH; Bidisha – writer, critic and broadcaster; Victoria Glendinning CBE – biographer; James Naughtie – broadcaster; Christopher Pearce – former Finance Director of Rentokil plc; Professor Louise Richardson – Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford; Ben Okri – writer and former Man Booker Prize winner. Jonathan Taylor CBE is President of the Foundation and Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, Sir Ronald Harwood and Baroness Neuberger are Vice Presidents

- The Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee, which advises on any changes to the rules and on the selection of the judges, represents all aspects of the book world. Its members are: Mark Chilton – Company Secretary and General Counsel of Booker Group plc; Jonty Claypole – Head of Arts, BBC; James Daunt – Managing Director of Waterstones; Jonathan Douglas – Director of the National Literacy Trust; Maggie Fergusson – writer and Secretary of the Royal Society of Literature; Adam Freudenheim – publisher, Pushkin Press; Derek Johns – author & literary agent; Peter Kemp – Chief Fiction Reviewer, The Sunday Times; Rosanna Konarzewski – Global Head of Communications and Marketing, Man Group; Nigel Newton – publisher, Bloomsbury; Fiammetta Rocco – Culture Editor, The Economist and 1843 (Man Booker International Prize Administrator); Michal Shavit – Publishing Director, Jonathan Cape; Eve Smith – Secretary, the Booker Prize Foundation; Boyd Tonkin – writer and critic. It is chaired by Gaby Wood, Literary Director, Booker Prize Foundation
- Man Group has sponsored the Man Booker Prize since 2002 and the Man Booker International Prize since its inception in 2005. An active investment management firm founded in 1783, Man Group was recognised as a partner that mirrored the quality, integrity and longevity of the Booker Prize. The prize underscores Man Group's charitable focus on literacy and education, as well as the firm's commitment to excellence and creativity. Together with the wider charitable activities of the Booker Prize Foundation, the prizes play a very important role in promoting literary excellence on a global scale that the firm is honoured to support
- Man Group is an active investment management firm focused on delivering performance and client portfolio solutions through its five investment management businesses: Man AHL; Man Numeric; Man GLG; Man FRM and Man Global Private Markets. Man Group's investment management businesses provide long-only, alternative and private markets products on a single and multi-manager basis, leveraging the firm's robust infrastructure to provide a diverse range of strategies across investment approaches, styles and asset classes. The original business was founded in 1783. Today, Man Group plc is listed on the London Stock Exchange under the ticker EMG.L and is a constituent of the FTSE 250 Index. As at 30 September 2017, Man Group's funds under management were \$103.5 billion. Man Group also supports many awards, charities and initiatives around the world, including sponsorship of the Man Booker literary prizes. Further information can be found at [www.man.com](http://www.man.com)
- Booker is the UK's leading food wholesaler with over 170 branches nationwide. It serves over 350,000 independent businesses
- The Booker Prize Foundation has a longstanding partnership with RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People). The Foundation funds the production of the shortlisted titles in braille, giant print and audio, which the sight loss charity produces by the date the winner is announced. The accessible versions are then made available to the tens of thousands of blind and partially sighted members of the RNIB Library. People with sight loss have a limited choice of books in accessible formats and often have to wait much longer than their sighted peers for titles to be made available to them. There are many more books that they will never have the chance to read. The Foundation is working with RNIB to change this story. For further information contact the RNIB Press Office on 020 7391 2223 or [pressoffice@rnib.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@rnib.org.uk)
- The Booker Prize Foundation has partnered with the National Literacy Trust since 2012 to deliver Books Unlocked. The Foundation funds the programme, which has transformed the lives of prisoners and young offenders in the UK by helping them develop a love of reading. Prisoners are able to engage with high-quality writing as copies of Man Booker Prize shortlisted titles are sent out to prison reading groups. These same titles are also serialised as audiobooks on National Prison Radio, which is broadcast into c.80,000 cells, enabling still more prisoners to experience these exceptional stories. Authors go into prisons to discuss their writing directly with reading groups and many also record interviews on National Prison Radio. The shared vision for Books Unlocked is to bring about positive change in prisoners' life chances [literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/books-unlocked/](http://literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/books-unlocked/)
- The Booker Prize Archive was given on loan in 2003 to Oxford Brookes University where it

now resides

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