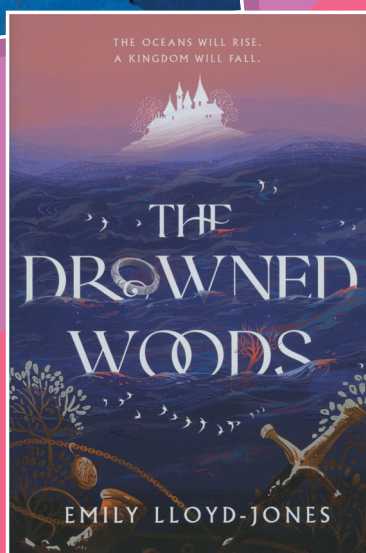
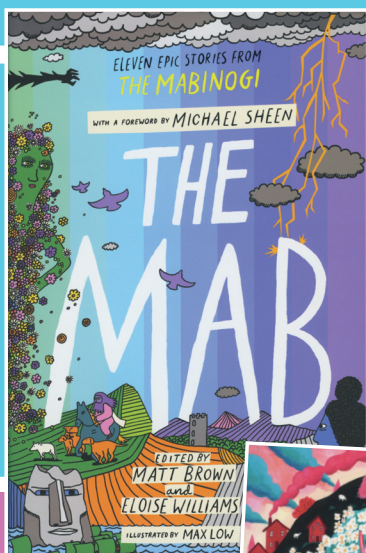


2023



Tir na n-Og

GWOBRAU • AWARDS

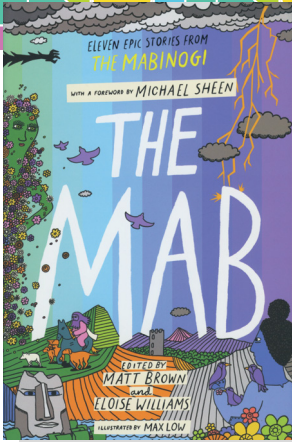
Schools Shadowing Pack

Tir na n-Og Awards 2023

English-language Category

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The Mab

Fiction

Editors: Matt Brown and Eloise Williams
(Unbound)

If you think you've heard all the fairy tales out there, think again. Here are eleven epic Welsh tales that are bound to enchant. *The Mab* is a collection full to the brim with brand new versions of old, old stories from the Mabinogi which are also strange, funny and thrilling. Alive with mystery and magic, they speak of a time when the gates between the Real World and the Otherworld were occasionally left open ... and sometimes it was possible to step through.



The Blackthorn Branch

Fiction

Author: Elen Caldecott
(Andersen Press)

Cassie's older brother Byron has fallen in with the wrong crowd – these boys are wild, reckless and not human at all. They are *tylwyth teg* – Fair Folk – who tempt humans into the dark places of the world. And Byron is tempted. When he goes missing, Cassie and her cousin, Siân, follow his trail to an abandoned railway tunnel which goes down into Annwn, the underworld. Here they find that the *tylwyth teg* are restless and angry. Their leader, Gwenhidw, wants to protect Annwn from the damage humans are doing to the world. Byron is part of her plan, but Cassie won't let him be part of anyone's plan. Can she rescue him before it is too late?



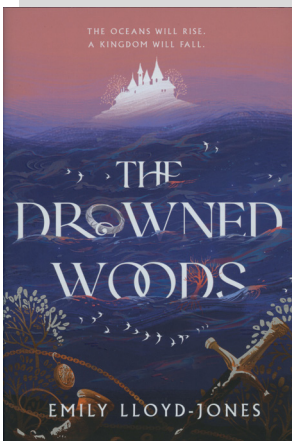
The Blue Book of Nebo

Fiction

Author: Manon Steffan Ros
(Firefly Press)

Dylan was six when The End came in 2018; when the electricity went off for good, and the 'normal' world he knew disappeared. Now he's 14 and he and his mam have survived in their isolated hilltop house above their village in north-west Wales, learning new skills, and returning to old ways of living.

Despite their close understanding, the relationship between mother and son changes subtly as Dylan must take on adult responsibilities. They each have their own secrets, which emerge as they jot down their thoughts and memories in the Blue Book.



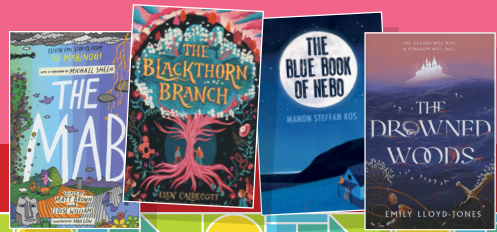
The Drowned Woods

Fiction

Author: Emily Lloyd-Jones
(Hodder & Stoughton)

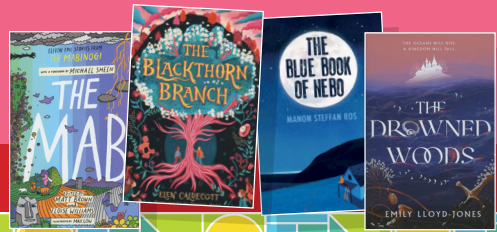
Once upon a time, the kingdoms of Wales were rife with magic and conflict, and eighteen-year-old Mererid – 'Mer' – is well-acquainted with both. As the last living water diviner, she can manipulate water with magic, a unique elemental power many would kill to possess. For years, Mer has been running from the prince who bound her into his service, and forced her to kill thousands with her magic. Now, all Mer truly wants is a safe, quiet life, far from power and politics.

But then Mer's old handler, the king's spymaster, returns with a proposition: she is to use her powers to bring down the very prince that abused them both.



Conversation-sparking questions and discussion points

- What did you enjoy about the book?
- Describe your favourite part of the novel. Why is this your favourite part?
- Was the book easy to read?
- What questions do you have, having finished the book?
- Do you think that you will remember this story in a few months or years? Why?
- Was the book different to your expectations? If so, how?
- Were you happy with the ending of the story? Why?
- What didn't you enjoy about the book?
- What would you like to change about the book? Why? How would you change it?
- Would you like to read the book again? Why?
- What questions did you have while reading the book? Were they answered? If so, how?
- In your opinion, who is this book suitable for?
- What is your opinion of the cover?
- If you could be in the book, which events in the book would you like to experience yourself and why?
- Would changing the location of the story have an effect on the story? How?
- Do you think that the title of the book suits the story? Why? If not, which title would you give to the book?
- What surprised you in this book? How so?
- Did the book remind you of any other books, films, or TV programmes?
- If the book was made into a film or TV programme, who would you cast as actors for the main characters? Why?
- Would you like to read more books like this? Why?
- What is your opinion about the themes that are discussed in the novels?
- If you were to meet the authors, which three questions would you like to ask them?
- Describe the book in one sentence.
- Have you learnt anything from reading the books? If so, what?
- How many of the stories in the book were you familiar with before you read it?
- If you had three copies of the book to give as presents, to whom would you give them? Why?
- Which patterns or recurring themes did you see in the book?
- Is there anything else you would like to learn more about after reading these novels?
- If you could meet any character from the book, who would you like to meet and why?



What about ...? Ideas to fire the imagination

The Mab

edited by Matt Brown
and Eloise Williams

What about ...

Research

Use the internet to find out more about the Mabinogi.

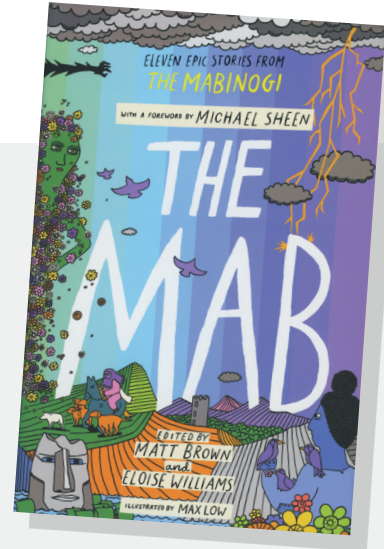
Here are some questions to consider whilst doing your research:

- In which century are the stories believed to have first been told?
- What other characters are included in the Mabinogi stories that aren't in *The Mab*? Why not choose one character and write your own reimagining?
- How many branches exist in the Mabinogi?
- What are the names of the branches of the Mabinogi?

Discuss

What is a legend?

What do different legends have in common?
What legends do you know? What kind of characters are there in a tale? What magical things happen in fairy tales?



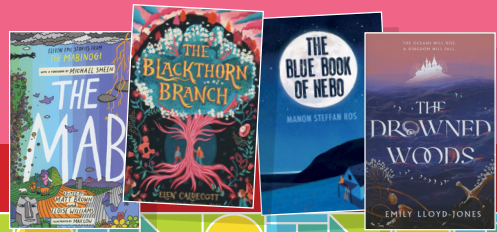
Draw

Each story in *The Mab* begins with an illustration. Why not choose one or more of the illustrations and create your own picture by drawing your own interpretation?

Think about the following questions whilst creating your own pictures:

- What kind of colours and styles does the illustrator use in the book?
- How would you describe the pictures?
- Which element of the story does the picture highlight?

You could also create your very own character or scene from one of the stories using a similar style to the illustrator.



What about ...? Ideas to fire the imagination

The Blackthorn Branch by Elen Caldecott

What about ...

Create

In the book, Cassie and Siân go on an adventure to find Cassie's missing brother, Byron. This adventure leads them down to the underworld, Annwn. What does this world look like to you? Can you create a picture of it? Or maybe you can create a storyboard of pictures to showcase Cassie and Siân's journey? Or a map showing the way to Annwn?

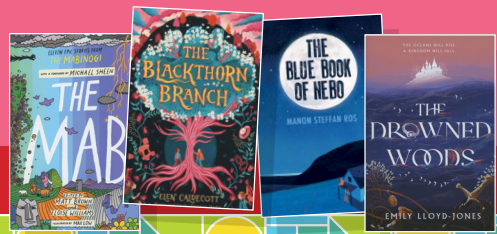
Write

Write your own descriptions of each character, and then draw a picture of what they look like next to the description. Or why not try writing a short paragraph from the perspective of at least two characters? Or what about creating your own dialogue between two characters? You could then act out this dialogue with a partner.



Record

Why not choose a passage or monologue from the book and record a voice recording or video clip reciting the words? Or in pairs or groups, choose a scene from the book to learn and act out. Take it in turns to record and perform the scenes, and use computer software or technology to put all the clips together. Then, you can enjoy watching the clips all together as a class.



What about ...? Ideas to fire the imagination

The Blue Book of Nebo by Manon Steffan Ros

What about ...

Discuss

In the novel, Rowenna goes to the library and tries to save books to take home with her. These books are then read by her son Dylan. In groups, why not discuss which books you would choose to save? Why would you save those books in particular? Why not make a list of five and compare these with the titles chosen by your classmates? Make a table and write the name of the book in one column and your reason for choosing it in another.

At the beginning of the book, Dylan's mam asks him to spend an hour a day writing the Blue Book. Imagine that you had your own Blue Book to fill, like Dylan and Rowenna. What would you choose to write about?



Listen and create

Listen to Manon reading from the first chapter of *The Blue Book of Nebo*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGhGqxDXrq0>

Read the extract by yourself or in pairs or groups. In the extract Dylan describes lots of different things, such as the Blue Book, and the view from the lean-to. Why not create your own picture of what one of these things looks like to you?

Record

Create a radio programme in pairs or groups where one person acts as the radio presenter, and the other person / people choose a character from the book. You can then ask and answer questions from the perspective of the characters. Think carefully about the types of questions the radio presenter would ask. What questions would you like to ask the characters? You could also record video clips and make a TV talk show.



What about ...? Ideas to fire the imagination

The Drowned Woods

by Emily Lloyd-Jones

What about ...

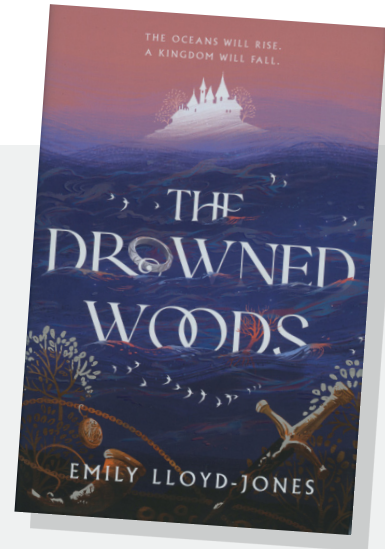
Discuss

In the novel, Mer has the power to control water. Why not discuss the different types of powers you and your class would like if you were characters in the book? Why not write a list of the positive and negative aspects that would accompany having these powers?

Play a part

The hot seat ...

Sit in the 'hot seat' and play the role of one of the characters from the book. The rest of the class can ask you questions.



Use technology

Why not record a monologue or an extract from the book using a green screen programme or a suitable app? Or instead of a monologue, why not work in pairs or groups to learn a piece of dialogue from the book and perform together in front of the class?

Matt Brown



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Tell us about the book:

The Mab is a retelling of the stories of the Mabinogi. The ancient tales are the oldest written stories in the history of the British Isles. They are funny, exciting, sad, and sometimes very weird.

Tell us a bit about writing the book:

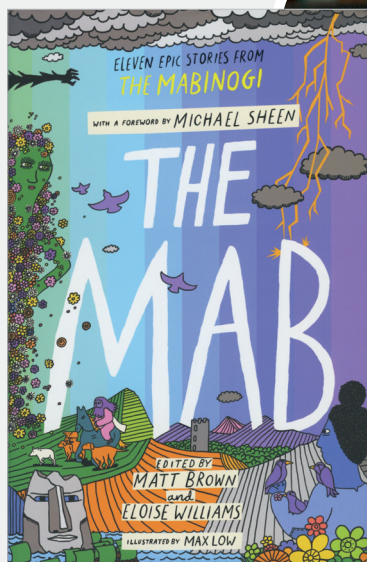
The stories all come from the oral storytelling tradition. This means that they used to be shared by people telling them rather than reading them. We thought it would be a good idea to get different authors to tell each story. That way, each tale would have its own style and its own rhythm. So, Eloise and I retold one story each, and then brought together a team of amazing writers to retell the others, and we then edited the collection. It was like we were assembling the Avengers (well, a bit).

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in the Vale of Glamorgan and Mid Glamorgan ... although, I'm not 100% sure that I'm fully grown.

Where did you go to school?

I went to Llanfair Primary school in St Mary Church, Cowbridge, and then Cowbridge Comprehensive School.



What was the best / worst thing about your school?

My secondary school had a lot of rooms that were freezing in the winter. There were some days that we were so cold that you had to keep your hats and gloves on. The best thing about school were my friends. I remember laughing a lot.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be all sorts of things. When I was really young I wanted to be a train driver, then I wanted to play football, then when I got a bit older, I wanted to design sets for the theatre.

What are your hobbies?

My hobbies are playing tennis, reading books, playing my guitar, and I have recently tried to start painting again. This was something I did when I was in school but haven't done for a long time.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

I had so many favourites. I loved *The Magic Finger* by Roald Dahl, and *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* by Sue Townsend. I can remember loving a book that was about a class of kids, and each chapter was a different dream that each kid had. I loved the book so much but I have absolutely no idea what it was called.

Matt Brown



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When did you consider being an author?

I have always written stories for my own enjoyment. The stories just kept getting bigger and bigger. I first tried to write a whole book about twenty years ago but didn't finish a book until about ten years ago, when I wrote a book about a boy who accidentally creates a time machine out of a sandwich. Once I'd written that I thought I could be an author.

Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

I love writing in different genres like sci-fi and fantasy, as well as myths and folktales. But the themes of my books tend to be the same – if you can find a good friend then anything is possible.

What advice can you give to budding authors?

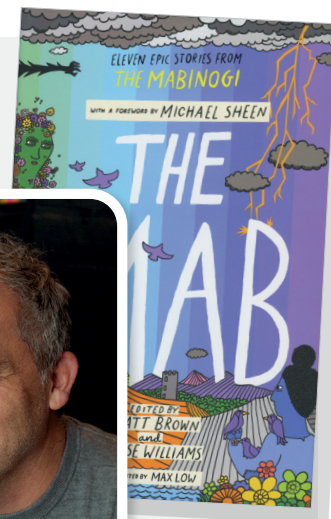
Write as much as you can. Write poems, or short stories, or a diary, or a blog. Anything that means that you get to write about something that you love. And join a library, because if you want to write, you have to read.

Do you have any rituals when you write?

Not really, although I write while I'm listening to the sound of waves crashing on the beach. There's something about the sound that seems to block everything out.

What's the best / worst part about being an author?

The best part about being an author is being able to get ideas that are in my head out into the world. I think it's really important to be creative, it doesn't matter how but you must try and express yourself.



Quick fire questions

What's your favourite childhood book?

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

Brer Rabbit.

Where is your favourite place to write?

Home.

What's your favourite food?

Ramen.

What's your favourite film or show?

Singin' in the Rain (film).

What's your favourite word?

Spatchcock.

What would be your superpower of choice?

Flight.

Favourite social media network?

Instagram.

What makes you smile?

Sweet little old ladies falling down holes.

If not an author what would you be?

A bookshop owner / librarian / butcher.

What's your advice for budding writers?

See things, then write about the things you've seen.

Eloise Williams



Tell us about the book:

The Mab is a collection of eleven retellings of the epic Welsh stories of the Mabinogi. These stories are really, really, really old. But as well as this, the stories are thrilling and funny and MAGIC.

Tell us a bit about writing the book:

It was a lovely experience. I got to work with eleven brilliant authors and one amazing illustrator. I've never worked with that many people on a book before, and it was fantastic to be part of such a talented team.

Where did you grow up?

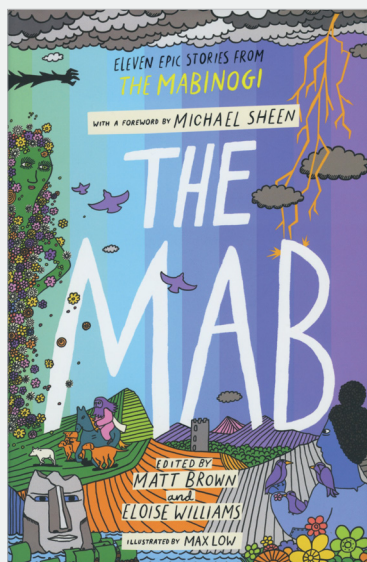
I grew up living opposite the library in Llantrisant which is about fifteen miles away from Cardiff. It has a really interesting history and there was a festival every year to celebrate it. I think that's what gave me my love of Welsh history in the first place.

Where did you go to school?

I went to Coed-yr-esgob Primary School in Llantrisant and then to Y Pant Comprehensive in Pontyclun.

What was the best / worst thing about your school?

I'd definitely choose the library as the best thing. The worst



thing? There were some subjects I just wasn't very good at, and I was very tough on myself. I realise now that you can't be good at everything. I wish I'd been a bit kinder to myself.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be an actor. I think it's because I knew that it was a job. If I'd known that you could be an author as a job, I think I would have wanted to do that instead.

What are your hobbies?

I really love walking with my dog, Watson Jones. Having a dog means you have to go out in every kind of weather. I'm a fan of bright, sunny days but I

really love stormy or foggy days too. I also like wild swimming and very occasionally, Watson will get into the water and swim with me.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

I had so many favourites. Anything mysterious or magical. I like stories about snow, ghosts, smugglers and the sea.

When did you consider being an author?

I didn't even think about it until I was in my thirties. I had a lot of stories to tell by then. The best thing about being an author is that you can start at any age – nine, nineteen or ninety!

Eloise Williams



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Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

I love to write about people discovering who they really are and being honest with themselves. I also write about hope and friendship a lot.

What advice can you give to budding authors?

Being an author is a bit like being a detective of life. Notice things around you using all your senses. Write notes of the things you see, hear, smell, touch and taste in a notebook. Use your imagination as much as you can. A good way to start your story is by asking yourself – what if...?

Also, the more you practise writing, the better you will get.

Do you have any rituals when you write?

I like to listen to music when I'm writing. I choose the music to suit the mood of the piece I'm trying to create. Sometimes I put together a playlist and as soon as I press play it puts me straight into the story.

What's the best / worst part about being an author?

The best bit is you can use your imagination and invent your own worlds and characters. The worst bit? Sometimes it can take a lot of hard work to get to the end of a story and tell it in the best possible way. It's always worth it though!

Quick fire questions

What's your favourite childhood book?

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

Alice Éclair, Spy Extraordinaire!

Where is your favourite place to write?

In the garden.

What's your favourite food?

Coffee and walnut cake.

What's your favourite film or show?

Jaws.

What's your favourite word?

Bobble.

What would be your superpower of choice?

Flight.

Favourite social media network?

Instagram.

What makes you smile?

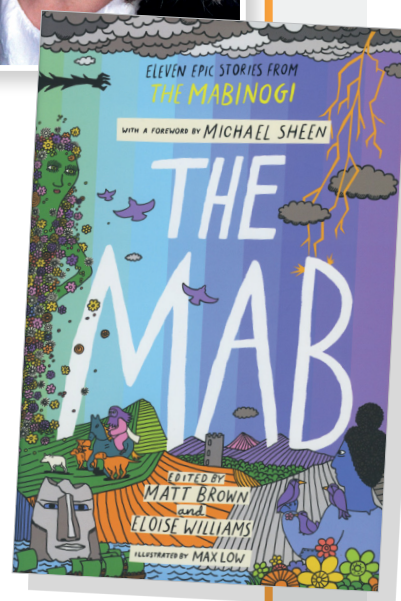
My niece, Ro (short for Rosie).

If not an author what would you be?

Deep-sea diver.

What's your advice for budding writers?

Read!



Elen Caldecott



Tell us about the book:

The Blackthorn Branch is a fantasy adventure in which Cassie has to save her older brother from the clutches of the tylwyth teg. Luckily, she has help from her cousin Siân and her nain on the quest.

Tell us a bit about writing the book:

It was written over the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020–21. I was missing my family horribly, especially my parents who I hadn't seen in a long while, and I was worried about them, because they are getting older. Writing the book was a way to stay connected with home.

Where did you grow up?

In the Dee Valley, near Llangollen in north Wales.

Where did you go to school?

Ysgol Morgan Llwyd, Wrexham.

What was the best / worst thing about your school?

The best things were the art and drama departments. I loved putting on plays and building the sets. The worst thing was the fact there wasn't much money at the time, so the classes were mainly held in freezing cold portacabins. I was always so miserable in winter!



What did you want to be when you grew up?

I thought it was most likely that I would be an English teacher; I have always liked words. But I wasn't sure what I wanted to be for a long time.

What are your hobbies?

I walk my dog. I like to go dancing. I love watching films. I think anything that makes me feel inspired and hopeful about the world is good.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

I read a lot of Roald Dahl. *Matilda* was a particular favourite because it made me try to move things with my mind. It never worked.

When did you consider being an author?

Not until I was in my late 20s. Although I had always written stories, it didn't occur to me that I might try to make a living that way until I was grown up.

Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

I like writing contemporary stories with a twist. So there are always real, domestic dramas happening in my stories, with a twist of something surprising or magical, maybe.

What advice can you give to budding authors?

Take your time. Write for yourself first, make yourself happy. Only worry about the industry and getting published when you feel ready.

Elen Caldecott



Do you have any rituals when you write?

Not really, as I have to fit writing time in where I can. I tend to use a notebook for ideas near the beginning, but move to a laptop for convenience, once the story has got going.

What's the best / worst part about being an author?

I think the best thing is you're your own boss – you get to choose when to work and on what. This is also the worst thing. Sometimes it might be nice to have other people nagging me to get to work!



Quick fire questions

What's your favourite childhood book?

Matilda.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

Stanley Yelnats (*Holes*).

Where is your favourite place to write?

Anywhere.

What's your favourite food?

Tomatoes with basil.

What's your favourite film or show?

Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

What's your favourite word?

Edwards (it's fun to type).

What would be your superpower of choice?

Time travel.

Favourite social media network?

Ewww ... can I say none?!

What makes you smile?

My dog Peggy.

If not an author what would you be?

Probably a nurse or a teacher.

What's your advice for budding writers?

That's too long an answer for here!

Manon Steffan Ros



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Tell us about the book:

It's a dystopian novel set in a world without society. Books in this story are a way for the two main characters to reconnect with their language. At the end of the world, there would always be other worlds living in books.

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Rhiwlas, a small hilltop village near Bethesda, north Wales.

Where did you go to school?

Ysgol Gynradd Rhiwlas and Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, and I'm very grateful that I got to go to such great schools.

What was the best / worst thing about your school?

I liked most things about school – seeing my friends, the reading and writing work, and all the fun I had! But I didn't like PE or maths lessons (which is a shame, because I enjoy those now).

What did you want to be when you grew up?

An author! I always loved books, and liked to think of little stories myself, but I didn't think that being a writer was a real job. I'm very, very grateful every day that I'm a writer now – it's the best job ever!



What are your hobbies?

I love to read, of course, but I also like to watch things on TV – often random videos on YouTube! Cooking is also a great interest of mine, and football. I'm a big Liverpool fan and like to go to Anfield when I get the chance.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

I had a really great teacher in Years 5 and 6, Gwenno Jones, and the books she read to us always captured my imagination. I specifically remember *O'r Tywyllwch* by

Mair Wynn Hughes and *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes. But I think that my favourite book when I was a child is still my favourite book to this day – *Boy* by Roald Dahl. I think the world of that book.

When did you consider being an author?

I don't remember not thinking about writing, to be honest. There have always been stories in my head. But I think I started thinking seriously about writing stories in a book when I had children, because I wanted to write things for them.

Manon Steffan Ros



Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

I like writing about young people, because I think it's an interesting, exciting but very difficult time in a person's life. Young people are expected to behave maturely like adults, but they do not have the same freedom as adults. That feels a bit unfair to me sometimes.

What advice can you give to budding authors?

Remember that every writer works differently, and there is no wrong way to tell a story. Some writers make a definite

plan before writing a word, and others, like me, start writing without a clue in the world what will happen in the book. Don't worry about things like that ... and enjoy!

What's the best / worst part about being an author?

The best thing is the fact that I make up stories all day, every day. The worst thing is that I get a bit obsessive about work and so sometimes stay up until the early hours writing ... but then I'm good for nothing the next day!



Quick fire questions

What's your favourite childhood book?

Boy by Roald Dahl and *O'r Tywyllwch* by Mair Wynn Hughes.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

It is very difficult to choose but I really admire Efa from the Melanai series by Bethan Gwanas.

What's your favourite food?

Bounties, mushrooms and cabbage, but not together!

What's your favourite film or show?

Jurassic Park.

What's your favourite word?

Trugaredd.

What would be your superpower of choice?

I think I would really enjoy the feeling of being able to fly.

Favourite social media network?

Twitter and TikTok.

What makes you smile?

Dad's bad jokes.

If not an author what would you be?

Historian.

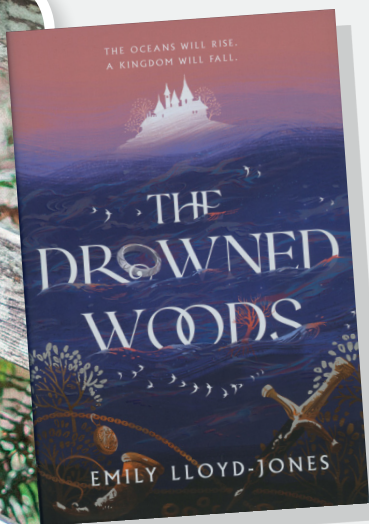
What's your advice for budding writers?

WRITE!

Emily Lloyd-Jones



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Tell us about the book:

The Drowned Woods is my loose retelling of the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod. Mer, a 17-year-old with the magical ability to control water, sets off on a quest with an old spymaster to take down a corrupt prince. How to do this? A heist! With a motley band including a fae-cursed young man, a corgi that might be a spy, the lady of thieves, and a few others, they attempt to seek out the magical well that protects Gwaelod. But nothing is as it seems!

Tell us a bit about writing the book:

I was fascinated with Welsh stories and folklore from a young age. My paternal grandfather was from north Wales, and I loved reading the myths and legends. As I grew older and began writing my own fantasy books, I

remembered those stories. Among them was that of Cantre'r Gwaelod: a kingdom that once existed where Cardigan Bay is today. I did more research, found many variations of the myth, and in several of them was a reference to a maiden who was in charge of a magical well. That lady, Mererid, bore the blame for the kingdom sinking. I wondered, "What would the story be like if I told it from her perspective?" And that was really the starting point for *The Drowned Woods*.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in the Pacific Northwest of Oregon. It was very rural – many forests, lots of sheep, and not a lot of people. I think that is where my love of forests was born.

Where did you go to school?

I attended Perrydale High School.

What was the best / worst thing about your school?

It was very small, with only 30 or so people in my class! On the one hand, it was nice because we all knew one another, but the small size could be a little stifling at times. The best part of the school was my English and literature teacher, Mrs Mays. She was very kind and encouraging.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I knew from a young age that I wanted to be an author. I grew up with stories. My mother was an avid reader and encouraged me to read and write. I wrote my first real story when I was sixteen. Looking back, it was terrible, but most first attempts usually are! I continued to practise and eventually, I got better.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy baking, playing with my two cats, and video games.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

The Chronicles of Prydain by Lloyd Alexander. I loved that series so much – epic battles, myths, and a cast of lovable characters. It was a very formative series for me.

Emily Lloyd-Jones



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When did you consider being an author?

I don't truly remember how old I was, but I was very young. My mother tells a story about when I was perhaps six or seven and I came up to her with pages stapled together and a story written in crayon. I think she still has it!

Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

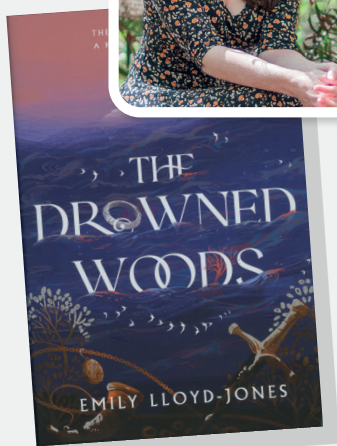
There are several, but the one I keep coming back to is: We all make mistakes but we can always learn from them. Many of my works have themes about forgiveness and learning to love and accept ourselves, even if we are flawed.

What advice can you give to budding authors?

Read widely! Read every genre and read as many authors as you can. A lot of the skills you will need as a writer can be self-taught through reading and writing. And never give up! Being an author is as much about determination as writing. You will have to believe in yourself and your words.

Do you have any rituals when you write?

I do enjoy a coffee in the morning before I sit down to write, and a cup of tea in the afternoon.



What's the best / worst part about being an author?

I think the best part is knowing that stories have a magic all their own. Books can comfort, inform, frighten, excite, and even change a person's viewpoint. Stories can be a refuge in scary times and a way to connect when we're feeling lonely. I truly believe that the right book in the right moment can save a life. The worst part is probably the uncertainty. As an author, you don't know what books will do well, how they will be received, if anyone will enjoy them. It feels like a leap of faith to put a book out into the world.

Quick fire questions

What's your favourite childhood book?

The Black Cauldron by Lloyd Alexander.

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

Bartimaeus from the *Bartimaeus Sequence* by Jonathan Stroud.

Where is your favourite place to write?

In a pink chair in my home office.

What's your favourite food?

I will eat pretty much anything, but I really enjoy baking my own bread.

What's your favourite film or show?

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.

What's your favourite word?

'Said', because I love writing dialogue.

What would be your superpower of choice?

The ability to stop time, because then I would not have to worry about deadlines.

Favourite social media network?

I enjoy Instagram.

What makes you smile?

My cats.

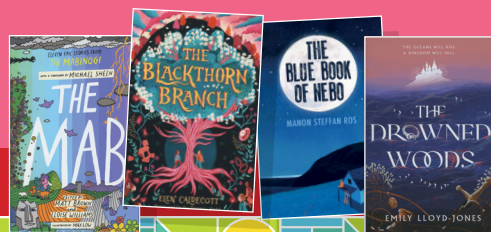
If not an author what would you be?

I honestly don't know ... maybe a nature photographer.

What's your advice for budding writers?

Read, read, read!

Meet the Judges



Page 18



Jannat Ahmed

*Editor-in-chief at
Lucent Dreaming*

Some of my earliest memories of reading include borrowing old Enid Blyton books at my grandmother's house. I also fondly remember lots of kind teachers, like Miss Jones and Miss Jenkins at primary school, who lent me their favourite books!

I think it's important that there are books for everyone about everything. Stories and poems helped me understand more about the world. When things are sad and difficult, sometimes books remind me what is most important. I always gravitate to books about characters who are kind, brave and value friendship.

There are so many brilliant books published to snack on and wolf down this year, and it's a great honour to be asked to help judge them.



Simon Fisher

*Primary school teacher
and book blogger*

Since reading some iconic texts from Wales as a youngster, I've known that reading was a way to connect me to my country. This is something I've encouraged in my own children, and through the website familybookworms we have highlighted and championed books of the highest quality from Welsh authors, illustrators and publishers. I love sharing stories, and reading aloud is a daily privilege.

As a teacher and parent, it's an honour to be a part of an enthusiastic reading community and spread the enjoyment I get sharing stories, inspiring youngsters, engaging with authors, and discovering new books.



Elizabeth Kennedy

School librarian

There is truly no better job in the world than to encourage children to read and develop the same love for reading that I have. I devoured books as a child and was frequently found reading by torchlight when I was meant to have been asleep. I had ridden polar bears in the North, joined an academy for witches, eaten snozzcumbers, flown with dragons, jumped down rabbit holes and enjoyed secret gardens – all before secondary school! It is my aim to encourage and support every child in their reading journey, whether it is with a graphic novel, magazine, non-fiction book, manga, classic novel, young adult fiction or an e-book. I was delighted to be asked to be a Tir na n-Og panellist as I never say no to reading new books. Being asked to read and explore books with a Welsh background and connection is a pleasure.

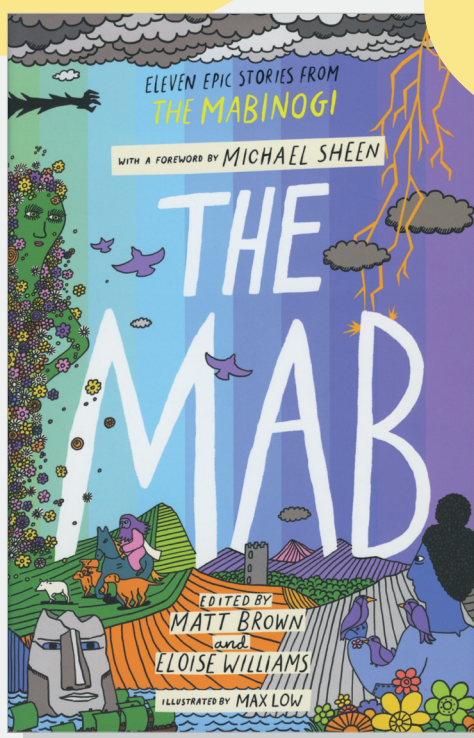
Judges' Comments



Page 19

The Mab brings together the very best of contemporary Welsh authors to retell stories from the Mabinogi.

This is an essential addition to any library and a must for every schoolchild.

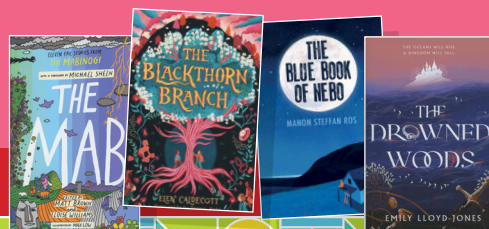


Immensely entertaining.

New life is given to these classic tales, and the humour, eccentricity, sense of danger and sheer brilliance of these ancient stories are evident through the joy of the writing.

It was a delight to read such a brightly illustrated, bilingual book which presents the stories from the Mabinogi in an accessible way.

Judges' Comments



Page 20

Set in a small Welsh village this is a rich atmospheric tale woven from the roots of myths and legends.

The main characters are drawn into a parallel fantasy realm and have to battle magical creatures as well as deal with their own struggles, not least a missing brother and grieving family.



The Blackthorn Branch has a relatable modern Welsh setting with characters with which you feel instantly at home.

This is an original and inventive story, brilliantly written and so, so enjoyable.

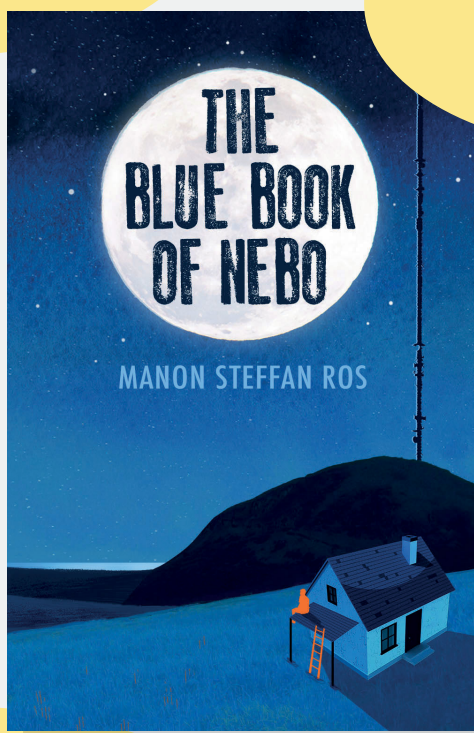
Judges' Comments



Page 21

The Blue Book of Nebo is an extraordinary story.

Momentous and unforgettable, this is a classic.



The book explores the relationship between a mother and son and their survival after The End (a nuclear event). For such demanding and distressing subject matter, there are moments of great tenderness, hope and optimism and it is written with great beauty.

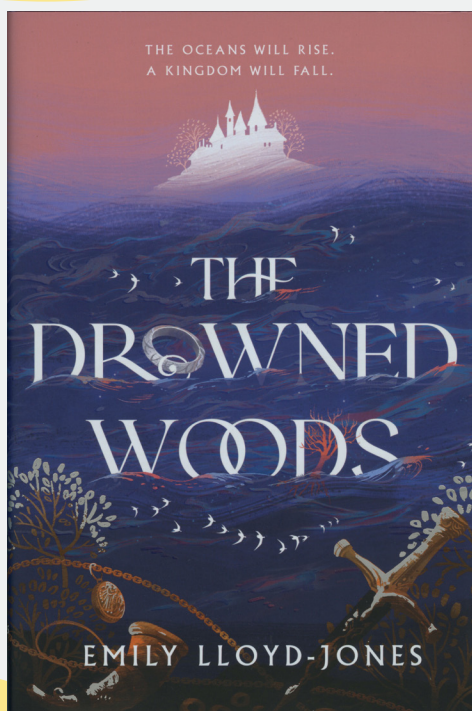
The Blue Book of Nebo is a deeply thought-provoking, insightful book which stays with you long after you've finished reading it.

Judges' Comments



Page 22

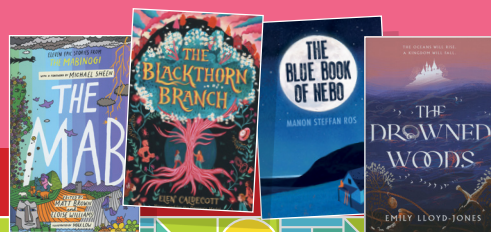
If the beautiful front cover doesn't entice you to read this then the corgi will! A thrilling Young Adult novel full of Welsh folklore and magic.



Game of Thrones comes to Cardigan Bay! *The Drowned Woods* is a vividly imagined medieval heist full of danger, threat and magic.

Drawing on Welsh mythology including the legend of Cantre'r Gwaelod, this fantasy thriller is hugely enjoyable and will have wide appeal.

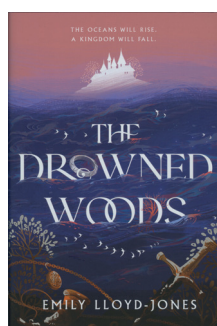
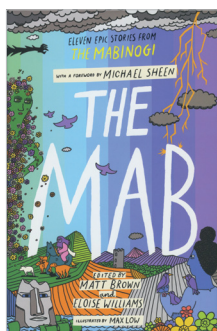
Notes Page



Page 23

Use this page to write any notes you may have on these books.

Photocopy this page
for each reviewer.



Marking Matrix

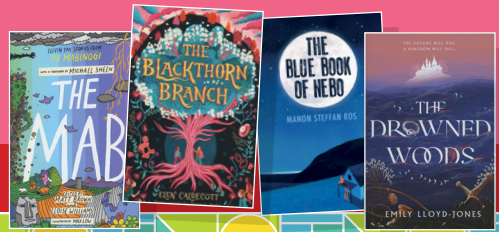


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Giving the books a rating may help you choose your favourite.

Book	<i>The Mab</i>	<i>The Blackthorn Branch</i>	<i>The Blue Book of Nebo</i>	<i>The Drowned Woods</i>
Title / Blurb /5 Does the blurb attract you to read the book? Does the blurb make it clear what kind of book it is? Is the title of the book suitable/effective/appealing? Does the blurb say enough/too much about the book? Do you like the title?				
Cover / Appearance /5 Do you like the cover? What do you think is most special about the cover or the way the book looks? Does the cover add to the story? Do you think the cover is playful/exciting /interesting? Does the cover attract your attention?				
Style / Language /5 What kind of language has the author used? e.g. dialect, descriptions, rhymes. What are the characteristics of the author's style? Was the language too easy or too difficult? Did you understand the language? Was the language and style interesting?				
Maintain interest /5 Did you enjoy the book? What kept you interested? e.g. humour, adventure, characters, information. Were you keen to read the whole book? Is the book going to stay in your memory? Is the book original?				
Characters /5 What kind of characters are in the book? Are the characters interesting/believable? How would you describe the characters? Did the characters appeal to you? Were you able to identify or empathise with the characters?				
Total /25				

Voting Cards



Page 25

Now that you've read and discussed the books shortlisted for the 2023 Tir na n-Og Award, here's your chance to vote for which book your group thinks is the best. Put an X in the box to mark your winner.

The Mab

☐

The Blackthorn Branch

☐

The Blue Book of Nebo

☐

The Drowned Woods

☐

The Mab

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The Blackthorn Branch

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The Blue Book of Nebo

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The Drowned Woods

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The Mab

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The Blackthorn Branch

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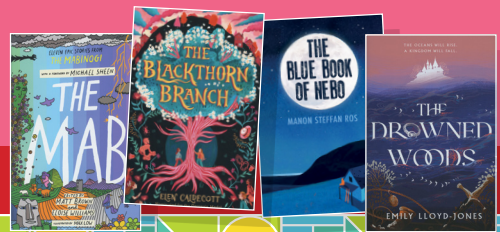
The Blue Book of Nebo

☐

The Drowned Woods

☐

Wordsearch



Page 26

H	S	L	X	Z	C	F	A	J	M	U	S	P	Q	O	D
D	V	E	I	K	H	N	U	R	F	T	G	S	N	K	F
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I	O	X	T	N	Q	C	M	B	E	K	N	U	L	G	A
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A	C	F	H	W	L	O	F	V	P	O	G	O	S	U	O
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Y	R	A	R	B	I	L	S	K	N	D	X	Y	V	P	H

BOOK
CHARACTER
READING
COVER
ILLUSTRATE
AUTHOR

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BOOKSHOP



2023

Tir na n-Og

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