



Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, To Kill a Mockingbird and The Hobbit – Amazon Reveals The Best Debut Novels Of All Time

26/07/2023

Amazon.co.uk reveals Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone to be the nation's favourite debut novel

90% of Brits believe that it is never too late to write your first novel

The research comes in a new nationwide study commissioned by Amazon's [Kindle Storyteller Award](#)

LONDON - July 26th 2023 - Amazon.co.uk today reveals that JK Rowling's era-defining novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, has been voted the greatest debut novel of all time in a new nationwide study commissioned by [Kindle Storyteller Award](#). The Award is a literary prize celebrating the UK's best self-published story, with the winning author receiving a £20,000 prize. It offers recognition for the nation's best established and new independent writers and is accepting submissions until 31st August 2023.

The study polled 2,000 Britons for their favourite debut novels, and the first instalment of Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, published in 1997, picked up one third (31%) of the vote. Harper Lee's historical coming-of-age drama *To Kill a Mockingbird* followed close behind, along with JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, an unforgettable story of Bilbo the peace-loving hobbit, embarking on a magical adventure.

Literary expert Tom Abba, Associate Professor at UWE Bristol, states that Rowling's debut is the bestselling debut novel of all time – totalling “in excess of 107 million copies sold to date.” Also according to Abba, “other universally acknowledged classic debuts include J.D Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* which has now totalled 70 million copies globally”.

The list also includes favourites like Stephen King's *Carrie* about a bullied high-school girl who discovers she has telekinetic powers, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, and William Golding's Nobel Prize-winning *Lord of the Flies*. More modern-day classics also making the cut were *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, *Twilight* by Stephanie Meyer, *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson, *Conversations with Friends* by Sally Rooney, and *Fifty Shades of Grey* by EL James – a sign that more recent debuts are joining the list of all-time greats.

There is a wide array bestselling titles from all genres on the list with authors spanning all ages and backgrounds – proving that literary success is possible regardless of background or age. The nation echoes these sentiments; 90% agree that it is never too late to let your creative juices flow and write a novel, and a third of all Brits want to write a novel one day.

Associate Professor Abba calculated that the average age of a debut novelist from the last two centuries is 34 years old, with the likes of John Grisham, Harper Lee and James Joyce publishing their debut novels at this age. A number of authors who received great acclaim for their debut novels did so after starting out in other careers – ranging from Grisham, who originally trained as a plumber's assistant, to J.D. Salinger, who started his career as an Entertainment Director on a Swedish cruise liner – proving that previous writing experience is not a requirement.

Since 2000, the average age for a debut novelist has increased to 35, which should provide encouragement for those who are thinking of a literary career as an exit route or 'side hustle' to their current line of work, especially with the rise of indie publishing providing an accessible avenue to success.

Public perception is slightly more ambitious, with survey respondents deeming that 30 years old is the ideal time to publish your debut novel; it's thought to be the perfect age thanks to having life experience, developing an interesting outlook, and having garnered both maturity and a passion for life.

While there are many authors that fit this trend, Abba explained that there have also been hugely successful exceptions to the rule too. Mary Shelley

was famously only 19 when she wrote her first draft of *Frankenstein*, and 21 when it was first published. Likewise, Daniel Defoe wrote his debut bestseller *Robinson Crusoe* at the age of 60, proving that age really is no barrier to literary success, a trend which is on the rise with many indie authors finding success in later life.

Darren Hardy, Manager for UK Author and Editorial Programmes at Amazon.co.uk, commented: "Literary success can happen at any age, as demonstrated by this research. Through the Kindle Storyteller Award, we want to inspire authors, and instil in them the confidence that no matter their age or walk of life, they have the autonomy to write and publish a story through Kindle Direct Publishing – and it could even become a bestseller. It's encouraging to see that we've had a number of debut authors submit for this year's Award, as well as established writers. It's going to be challenging to narrow this year's submissions down to a shortlist!"

Tom Abba, Associate Professor at UWE Bristol, said: "From the emergence of the mass market paperback in the 1930s to the arrival of eBooks and the Kindle in the new millennium, publishing has changed beyond all recognition over the last century. What remains though, is the power of words, and the ability of a story to reach an audience. Age is no barrier to the creative spirit, and if you want to write a book, then time, craft and a good idea are really your only considerations."

One quarter of Brits claim they have an idea for a novel, but don't know where to start. Meanwhile 27% would love to put pen to paper, but don't have the idea nailed. Encouragingly, one third of Brits hope to publish their novel eventually, and 39% of under 30s believe that their words will reach the masses one day.

Darren Hardy, Manager for UK Author and Editorial Programmes at Amazon.co.uk, added: "Whether the submission is for a debut novel or a new book in an ongoing series, the Kindle Storyteller Award embraces writers of all ages and stages of their career. It's always so inspiring to hear of the many aspiring writers out there, and we hope that the Kindle Storyteller Award will inspire people, no matter their background, to achieve their truest potential."

The Kindle Storyteller Award is open for entries until 31st August 2023. All titles must be enrolled in Kindle Direct Publishing Select while they are in the competition. For further information, visit www.amazon.co.uk/storyteller.

Britain's favourite debut novels:

1. "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" by JK Rowling – 31%
2. "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee – 26%
3. "The Hobbit" by JRR Tolkien – 26%
4. "Carrie" by Stephen King – 20%
5. "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley – 18%
6. "Lord of the Flies" by William Golding – 17%
7. "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" by Douglas Adams – 16%
8. "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" by L Frank Baum – 15%
9. "The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo" by Stieg Larsson – 14%
10. "Gone with the Wind" by Margaret Mitchell – 14%
11. "Fifty Shades of Grey" by EL James – 14%
12. "The Time Machine" by HG Wells – 14%
13. "Casino Royale" by Ian Fleming – 13%
14. "Sense and Sensibility" by Jane Austen – 13%
15. "The Catcher in the Rye" by JD Salinger – 13%
16. "Catch-22" by Joseph Heller – 11%
17. "Twilight" by Stephenie Meyer – 11%
18. "The Picture of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde – 11%
19. "The Time Traveler's Wife" by Audrey Niffenegger – 10%
20. "The Pickwick Papers" by Charles Dickens – 9%
21. "Fight Club" by Chuck Palahniuk – 8%
22. "The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time" by Mark Haddon – 8%
23. "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison – 8%
24. "A Study in Scarlet" by Arthur Conan Doyle – 7%
25. "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini – 7%

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Research of 2,000 UK based adults was commissioned by Amazon and conducted by [Perspectus Global](#) in July 2023.

About the Kindle Storyteller Award

The Kindle Storyteller Award accepts submissions of new books in the English language, published using Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP). Judges of the 2023 awards include Sue Perkins and Baroness Floella Benjamin and the winner will be announced in autumn this year.

Entries must be previously unpublished, with a minimum of 24 pages in paperback, and they must be enrolled in KDP Select while they are in the competition. Readers can access all titles entered into the prize in print or on the Kindle eReader or on the free Kindle app for iOS, Android and Fire devices. Print copies will also be available to buy on the Amazon.co.uk store.

KDP is a fast, free and easy way for authors to publish their books in print and digital to a global audience and receive up to 70 per cent royalties on their work. Hundreds of thousands of authors use KDP to sell their books around the world and thousands of them earn more than \$50,000, with more than a thousand passing \$100,000 in royalties. Authors who made their books available through Kindle Unlimited earned their share of a fund worth more than \$474 million over the last 12 months.

About Amazon

Amazon is guided by four principles: customer obsession rather than competitor focus, passion for invention, commitment to operational excellence, and long-term thinking. Amazon strives to be Earth's Most Customer-Centric Company, Earth's Best Employer, and Earth's Safest Place to Work. Customer reviews, 1-Click shopping, personalised recommendations, Prime, Fulfilment by Amazon, AWS, Kindle Direct Publishing, Kindle, Career Choice, Fire tablets, Fire TV, Amazon Echo, Alexa, Just Walk Out technology, Amazon Studios, and The Climate Pledge are some of the things pioneered by Amazon. For more information, visit amazon.co.uk/about and follow @AmazonNewsUK.

For further information please contact:

Hunt & Gather Email: BooksProjects@hunt-gather.com

Please download press imagery [here](#).