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A Look at the National Book Awards Longlists --With Poll Results

by Robin A. Rothman on September 20, 2013

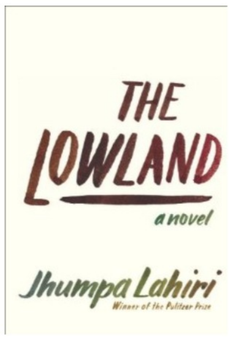
The National Book Foundation took a new approach to its award nominee announcements this year, releasing longlists for each of four categories: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Young Adult Literature. The lists each consist of 10 nominees, which will be halved in the next few weeks. The winners will be announced at the National Book Awards ceremony in New York on Nov. 20.

But you don't have to wait that long to learn the winners of public opinion. We presented each longlist as a poll in which our readers could vote for their favorites. The results are in! The full longlists and those results follow. And a big thank you to everyone who participated!

Fiction

New York's big publishing houses have swept the fiction category this year, with each nominee representing a different imprint. Three of our Best of the Month picks made this perfectly gender-balanced list: Anthony Marra's debut novel, George Saunders' short story collection, and Jhumpa Lahari's sophomore novel.

From the get-go, our readers kept Lahiri and Saunders neck-and-neck, but ultimately it was *Lowland* that ended up on top with 28 percent of the vote.



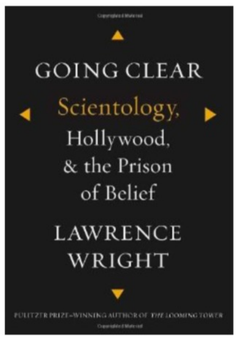
Here's the complete list of nominees:

- *Pacific* by Tom Drury
- *The End of the Point* by Elizabeth Graver
- *The Flamethrowers* by Rachel Kushner
- *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri
- *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* by Anthony Marra
- *The Good Lord Bird* by James McBride
- *Someone* by Alice McDermott
- *Bleeding Edge* by Thomas Pynchon
- *Tenth of December* by George Saunders
- *Fools* by Joan Silber

Nonfiction

Two themes can be immediately gleaned from the Nonfiction contenders. First, all are first-time NBA nominees, except for Lawrence Wright (who was previously nominated in 2006 for *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*). Second, it's almost all about America, Gretel Ehrlich and Wendy Lower offering international exceptions.

Wright was our readers' favorite, taking 31 percent of the votes.



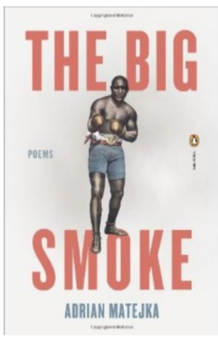
Here's the complete list of nominees:

- *Finding Florida: The True Story of the Sunshine State* by T.D. Allman
- *Facing the Wave: A Journey in the Wake of the Tsunami* by Gretel Ehrlich
- *The Wolf and the Watchman: A Father, a Son, and the CIA* by Scott C. Johnson
- *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin* by Jill Lepore
- *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* by Wendy Lower
- *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* by James Oakes
- *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America* by George Packer
- *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* by Alan Taylor
- *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington* by Terry Teachout
- *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief* by Lawrence Wright

Poetry

Again including many first-time nominees, the veterans here are, within poetry circles, familiar names. Frank Bidart -- a Pulitzer Prize finalist -- has received three NBA nods, and Andrei Codrescu should be known to NPR listeners.

It was Adrian Matejka's *The Big Smoke*, a collection of poems about heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson, that our readers are rooting for, garnering 26 percent of the votes.

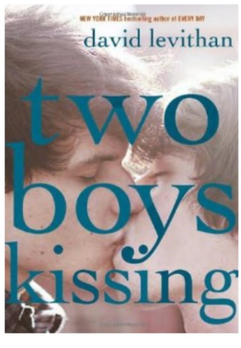


Here's the complete list of nominees:

- *Metaphysical Dog* by Frank Bidart
- *Bury My Clothes* by Roger Bonair-Agard
- *Stay, Illusion* by Lucie Brock-Broido
- *So Recently Rent a World, New and Selected Poems: 1968-2012* by Andrei Codrescu
- *Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire* by Brenda Hillman
- *The Big Smoke* by Adrian Matejka
- *American Amnesiac* by Diane Raptosh
- *Black Aperture* by Matt Rasmussen
- *Transfer of Qualities* by Martha Ronk
- *Incarnadine* by Mary Szybist

Young Adult

The list includes some great books for younger readers, representing a range of ages, genres, and themes. Four of our own Best of the Month picks (indicated by * below) made the cut. But for our readers, it seems, the clear winner is *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan, which earned an impressive 44 percent of the votes.



Here's the complete list of nominees:

- **The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp* by Kathi Appelt*
- **Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* by Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by K.G. Campbell*
- **A Tangle of Knots* by Lisa Graff*
- *The Summer Prince* by Alaya Dawn Johnson
- *The Thing About Luck* by Cynthia Kadohata
- *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan
- **Far Far Away* by Tom McNeal*
- *Picture Me Gone* by Meg Rosoff
- *The Real Boy* by Anne Ursu, illustrated by Erin McGuire
- *Boxers and Saints* by Gene Luen Yang

Read our resident YA expert Seira Wilson's take on this longlist here.

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Abhinav Agarwal's bookshelf pictured above (Share yours)

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Archives
December 2013
November 2013
October 2013
September 2013
August 2013
July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013

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Amazon Asks Author Interviews Author Podcasts Best Books Best of the Month Best of the Year Book Awards Book Trailers Brave Horse Sessions Children's Books Comics Cookbooks Editor's Picks Entertainment Fantasy Gardening George RR Martin Graphic Novels Guest Posts Harry Potter History How I Wrote It Humor Hunger Games Mystery News Nonfiction Romance Sara Says Science Fiction Weekend Flashback Women's Fiction Young Adult

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