

Blyton favourite author of British adults; followed by Dahl, Rowling

In a poll outcome set to delight children worldwide, British adults have voted Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl and J.K. Rowling as their three favourite writers, putting them well ahead of authors of the critically acclaimed 'serious stuff'.

A nationwide poll of adult British readers, commissioned to mark the 2008 Costa Book Awards, saw English literature stars William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and Jane Austen trail behind children's authors in the list of the top 50.

Geoffrey Chaucer, whose 'Canterbury Tales' is considered one of the seminal texts of English literature, came bottom of the list.

Beatrix Potter, another children's favourite (remember Tom Kitten and Peter Rabbit?), also appeared in the top 10, as did Agatha Christie - whose detective novels are a favourite of many older children - and J.R.R. Tolkien, author of 'The Lord of the Rings'.

And C.S. Lewis, whose Narnia series is a children's classic, nudged Potter at number 11.

The love affair between British adults and the page-turner adventures of Blyton, Harry Potter creator Rowling and Dahl (author of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' and many other popular books) did not come as a surprise to some.

Jeff Norton of Chorion, owners of the Enid Blyton estate, said: 'We are delighted that the British public has voted Enid Blyton its best-loved author. Her storytelling is timeless and this result confirms that her books are still a firm favourite today.'

Eight million Blyton books are sold worldwide every year, including more than a million of her Famous Five series.

Also crowding the list were children's authors Jacqueline Wilson, Judy Blume, Jilly Cooper and the ever-popular cartoonist-writer Dr. Seuss (his titles include: 'Green Eggs and Ham', 'The Cat in the Hat' and 'One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish').

In fact, the first serious contemporary writer - Martin Amis, a critically acclaimed chronicler of the post-modern condition - managed no better than number 22.

The following is the ranked list of the 50 best-loved authors, as voted by British adults:

Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, J.K. Rowling, Jane Austen, William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, J.R.R. Tolkien, Agatha Christie, Stephen King, Beatrix Potter, C.S. Lewis, Catherine Cookson, Martina Cole, Bill Bryson, Charlotte Bronte, Jacqueline Wilson, Oscar Wilde, Maeve Binchy, Dan Brown, Emily Bronte, Jackie Collins, Martin Amis, Isaac Asimov, Margaret Atwood, John Grisham, Marian Keyes, H.G. Wells, Alan Bennett, Arthur C. Clarke, George Orwell, Danielle Steel, Iain Banks, Judy Blume, Jodi Picoult, Arthur Conan Doyle, Peter Ackroyd, Kingsley Amis, P.G. Wodehouse, Dr. Seuss, Mark Twain, J.G. Ballard, Thomas Hardy, James Patterson, Ian Rankin, Leo Tolstoy, Irvine Welsh, Jilly Cooper, Beryl Bainbridge, Ray Bradbury and Geoffrey Chaucer.

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