

2026 PenMasters Global Award for Literary Excellence



Winners and Finalists

*The number of Finalists varies by category and is based solely on judging results—not a fixed quota. Some categories may have more Finalists than others depending on the overall strength and competitiveness of the entries. Finalist recognition is awarded only to works that meet the standards established by our judges.

GRAND PRIZE BOOK OF THE YEAR

Beneath The Rings — Joe Battaglia — Franklin Publishers

FICTION CATEGORIES

BOOK OF THE YEAR

Beneath The Rings — Joe Battaglia — Franklin Publishers

General Fiction

WINNER

Escala's Wish: An action-adventure, unusual romantasy filled with banter, light humor, and real-life emotion (Tales of Valla) — David James — Trash Panda Publishing

FINALISTS

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC
The Song Cannot Be Silenced — Aldon Law — To be published 10th September, 2026

Literary Fiction

WINNER

The Seven — Igor Stefanovic — Igor Stefanovic

FINALISTS

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC
Mission Finity — Robin Riback — n/a
Space Station — K.R. Gadeken — K.R. Gadeken
Council Ford Insurrection: The Second Amendment 2043-2063 — J.Thomas Bowne JD — Archway Publishing
Snow Angel Christmas — Pamela Rose Gardner Scee — WestBow Press
The Third Estate Secrets of the Manor — D. R. Berlin — self published

Historical Fiction

WINNER

Snakeroot and Cohosh — Cathy Schieffelin — Atmosphere Press

FINALISTS

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC
All the Moonlight on Earth — Jesse Muehlbauer — Allaire Publishing LLC

Born In The Aftermath — Ian Griffin — n/a
Forecast — Aaron Ryan — self published
Therein Lies the Pearl — Catherine Hughes — Historium Press
Being Hope — Chuck Locklear — n/a

Women's Fiction

WINNER

The Women Who Stand Between — Jeannee Sacken — Ten 16 Press (an imprint of Orange Hat Publishing)

FINALISTS

Snakeroot and Cohosh — Cathy Schieffelin — Atmosphere Press
Dancing Through the Shadow — Agnus Bristol — Leif Films Media Inc.
Tell Me Why You Are Here — Jessica Lee Mizia — AuthorHouse
The Third Estate Secrets of the Manor — D. R. Berlin — self published
Beneath The Rings — Joe Battaglia — Franklin Publishers

Urban Fiction

WINNER

The Affinity Theory: The Affinity Saga Book 1 — Eddie Dee Williams — Self-published

Satirical Fiction

WINNER

Connption Creek (A Comedy of the Darkly Absurd) — Earl L Carlson — Ragged Edge Publications LLC

Magical Realism

WINNER

COME THE BLOOD MOON NIGHT — M. FLAGG — THE WILD ROSE PRESS

FINALISTS

Strawberry Heaven — Ann Ledgerwood — Self-published
Ancilla — Sera Maddox Drake — Self-published

Metafiction

WINNER

Time Capsules — Tom Sabino — Archway Publishing

Fantasy

WINNER

Heroes of Another Age — B.L. Mostyn — BookBaby

FINALISTS

The Merging of the Realms, Book One: Tales from The Wandering Woods — Richard Talley — Balboa Press

Beyond Superhero School: Let The Games Begin! — Gracie Dix — Amazon KDP

The Affinity Theory: The Affinity Saga Book 1 — Eddie Dee Williams — self-published

Escala's Wish: An action-adventure, unusual romantasy filled with banter, light humor, and real-life emotion (Tales of Valla) — David James — Trash Panda Publishing

Science Fiction

WINNER

All the Moonlight on Earth — Jesse Muehlbauer — Allaire Publishing LLC

FINALISTS

The Affinity Theory: The Affinity Saga Book 1 — Eddie Dee Williams — Self-published

ORION: Heavenfall — Corey Frazier — n/a

The Artorian Chronicles — Nicholas Mrvos — A9 Publishing

Dissonance Volume I: Reality — Aaron Ryan — self

BORN OF EMPIRE — S. A. MELIA — DICKSON HOUSE

Mission Finity — Robin Riback — n/a

Dystopian Fiction

WINNER

Utopia Realized: In Search of a Just Society — Kurt Warner — Maida Vale

Horror

WINNER

Baelor: The Cornelius Duet: Part One — J.K Albers — iUniverse

FINALISTS

Ghost Writer — Arjay Lewis — Mindbender Press

Romance

WINNER

The Story of Josette and Daniel: A Contemporary Sweet Romance Trilogy — Dr. Katherine E.A. Korkidis
— Word-2-Kindle

FINALISTS

Escala's Wish: An action-adventure, unusual romantasy filled with banter, light humor, and real-life emotion (Tales of Valla) — David James — Trash Panda Publishing

Mystery / Suspense

WINNER

FABRICATION Murder is Real — Carol M. P. Kimball — n/a

FINALISTS

The Community Files: Reclaiming your Community — Charles R. Rogers — WestBow Press
The Women Who Stand Between — Jeannee Sacken — Ten 16 Press (an imprint of Orange Hat Publishing)
Sister Mary's Angels — Randall Reynolds — Archway Publishing
Murder on Knollwood — Marshall Prescott — LifeRich Publishing
The Third Estate Secrets of the Manor — D. R. Berlin — self published
The Portal: A Supernatural Mystery of Life After Death — Lou Pugliese — n/a
The Art of Obsession — Douglas J. Ostling — Cryptic Glyph Press

Thriller / Adventure

WINNER

Beneath The Rings — Joe Battaglia — Franklin Publishers

FINALISTS

ORION: Heavenfall — Corey Frazier — n/a
Tom's Girl — Riley Leigh — ArchwayPublishing
Born In The Aftermath — Ian Griffin — n/a
The Third Estate Secrets of the Manor — D. R. Berlin — self published
Black and White Smoke- C-Suite Woes: Subtlety has Limits — Thomas Vincent Papa — n/a
The Goodflyers: Lords of the Emerald Coast — John J Domina — Archway Publishing

Inspirational Fiction

WINNER

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC

FINALISTS

Jesus, Open the Eyes of My Heart — Marsha Gauthier — WestBow Press
Eternal Spring — Cheryl Collins — LifeRich Publishing
The Sky Is The Limit: Children's Stories On Exploring The Power Of Self — Astrid Hoffmann — Balboa Press
The Stonecaster: A Modern Parable About Intention, Response, and the Ripples We Create — Dillon W. Buck — Houndstooth Press

Religious / Spiritual Fiction

WINNER

The Burn — Matt Posey — WestBow Press

FINALISTS

The End: Alpha — Aaron Ryan — self

LGBTQ+ Fiction

WINNER

The Third Act — Kathleen Brehony — Self

FINALISTS

Back to the Beach. (Published March, 2026). — Alistair Sutton (my pen name). — Clark & Macka

Young Adult Fiction

WINNER

Losing Austin — Michael J. Bowler — Michael J. Bowler

FINALISTS

14 hours of saturn — Mike J. Kizman — Authors Eden
The Third Estate Secrets of the Manor — D. R. Berlin — self published
August Rain — Marlo Holly — Balboa Press
THE DRUID'S TATTOO — James Gregory Kingston — n/a
Over the Wall — Catherine Kramer — Archway Publishing
BORN OF EMPIRE — S. A. MELIA — DICKSON HOUSE
Defenders of Zzzodd: Dreamers Return — Ty E. Smith — Spines

Middle Grade Fiction

WINNER

Muppit Boy and the Allergies of Evil — Michael J. Bowler — Michael Bowler

FINALISTS

I Can Go Anywhere: National Parks — Karissa Nix — Archway Publishing
Strawberry Heaven — Ann Ledgerwood — Self-published

Short & Long Form Fiction

WINNER

The Eternal Predicament Of William J. McCoy — J. Nois Lane — Miniature Ginormous Media / Yellow Monkey Press

Novella

WINNER

Snakeroot and Cohosh — Cathy Schieffelin — Atmosphere Press

Short Story Collection

WINNER

20/40: 12 Short Stories Foretelling Life in the Year 2040. — Steven Sarshik — Archway Publishing

FINALISTS

Fast Friends: Tales of Remarkable Friendship — Dan Gribbin — Xlibris US

Illustrated Fiction

WINNER

Jazzy and Rhumbi Our Noble Tree — Dori Seider — Xlibris Us

Hybrid (Fiction & Nonfiction)

WINNER

Skies and Chasms: Poems — James Richard Hansen — AuthorHouse

CHILDREN'S CATEGORIES

BOOK OF THE YEAR

How to Dress a Dinosaur — Robin Currie — Familius

Children's Picture Book

WINNER

How to Dress a Dinosaur — Robin Currie — Familius

FINALISTS

Doña Basura Manda en una Tierra Llana — Martha Goldner — Xlibris Us
At the Ragtag Hotel: The Elevator Ride — Freya Novak — Freya Novak
Giglet the Happy Piglet Goes to School — A.M. Berkowitz — AMB Kids Books

Early Reader

WINNER

Why? — Elena Kayne — Elena Berdine

FINALISTS

Tricky Pickle Carrot Cake — Brytta H Fitzgibbons — Xlibris Us
Bubbles in Spring (Seasons with Bubble Girl series) — Wanda Carter Roush — Ella's Pearl Publishing
Bobby Loves Baseball — Craig Ohlau — Craig Ohlau
My 1st Book of Community Superheroes: Learn about community helpers (For Toddlers and Kids ages 2-5 years) — Sara Kale — Independently published

Chapter Book

WINNER

The Magical Farm Mysteries: Bubble Gum Rocks — A.M. Berkowitz — BookBaby

FINALISTS

The Mystery of the Sparkling Compass (Brave Friends Adventure Club) — Monica Swope — Learning Dimensions

Children's Fantasy

WINNER

The Adventures of Pengzhou Panda: Pengzhou Panda Discovers Destiny — Scott Fales — N/A

FINALISTS

Spots the Cow Goes on a Journey — Brenda Kay Minor — Brenda Kay Minor

Children's Educational Book

WINNER

Spots the Cow Goes on a Journey — Brenda Kay Minor — Brenda Kay Minor

FINALISTS

I Found My Piece — Rashmi Kumar Shah — ArchwayPublishing
Litter Lady Leads: in a Litter-filled Land — Martha Goldner — Xlibris US

Children's Inspirational Book

WINNER

The Girl from Korn — Eileen Hobbs — Palmetto Publishing

FINALISTS

Gigi Butterfly — Tiffany Ronette — Tiffany Ronette

Wagon of Worries — Ruthie Godfrey — Ruthie Godfrey Books, LLC

Line 'Em Up! — Oscar Avery — Bread n Butter Bookz

Just a Dot? I Think Not! — Heidi Solomon-Orlick — Independently published

Children's Interactive Book

WINNER

Blue Bubble Gum — Martha Goldner — Xlibris US

Illustrated Children's Book

WINNER

Bubbles in Spring (Seasons with Bubble Girl series) — Wanda Carter Roush — Ella's Pearl Publishing

FINALISTS

Welcome Baby Wiglet — A.M. Berkowitz — BookBaby

Turtles Treacherous Trip — Danny Barron — Westbow Press

St John the Ambulance Cat — Natasha Burrell — Xlibris NZ

Mia and Loki The Somersault Ducks of Cerro Vaca — Jane E. Ruth — Jane's Books

I Have a Voice: A Book of Listening — Heidi Solomon-Orlick — AMZ Publisher House

NONFICTION CATEGORIES

BOOK OF THE YEAR

The Good Death: A Guide for Supporting Your Loved One Through the End of Life — Suzanne B. O'Brien, RN — Little, Brown Spark

Memoir

WINNER

Falling from Disgrace — Tammy S Dietz — Cynren Press

FINALISTS

My Good Life — Dr. Gregory M. Lee — The Paper House
Injustice My Story — Dr. Iris Wright — Iris Wright

Biography

WINNER

The Way of New Beginning: Discovering a New Spiritual Path on the Camino de Santiago — Mark LaRocca-Pitts — WestBow Press

FINALISTS

My Good Life — Dr. Gregory M. Lee — The Paper House
How Many Threes Are in Your Life? - A Case for Miracles — E. Spirit Greenwood III — LifeRich Publishing
Have You Seen Grandma's Bra? - ...and other stories from one man's journey to the Father's Mercy — Michael Skoch MD — AuthorHouse
What to Say When You Pray: Step into Bible stories; step out with bold prayers and courageous faith! — Ginger Hertenstein Conley — WestBow Press
Sunward: Our Zigzag Path to High-Functioning Autism — Jo Anne Jeffries — Balboa Press
Gone To The Dogs: Tales of a Dog Napper — Kate Moore — Archway Publishing
So You Want To Be A Lawyer — Armand J. Della Porta, Jr., Esq. — Archway Publishing

Essay Collection

WINNER

HEALING THE HIDDEN WOUNDS OF WOMEN AND MOTHERS: TRANSFORMATIVE TOOLS FOR HOLISTIC HEALING AND MENTAL WELL-BEING — Jummy Kirby M a Lpc Pmh-C Cmp — Archway Publishing

FINALISTS

Amen, Amen: Sixty Truths Jesus Emphasized — Lee Canning — WestBow Press

Self-Help

WINNER

The Good Death: A Guide for Supporting Your Loved One Through the End of Life — Suzanne B. O'Brien, RN — Little, Brown Spark

FINALISTS

Wonders of the Soul — Helen P. Slater — Balboa Press UK
A PLACE OF PROMISE — Marcie Shrewsbury Lopez — Balboa Press
FOR ALL AS FOR ONE: Uplifting Messages from Spirit Tied in With Scripture — LeRosa Leigh — iUniverse
A Walk Thru The Mind: If you understand the rules, you can play the game of life better. — Sneha Bandaru — Balboa Press

Cultivate Creativity: In the Garden of Enlightenment — Linda Richichi — Balboa Press
Wisdom from My Grandmothers: how messages from the past shed light on your life today — Jo Ann Fawcett — Dragonhill Books
The Ultimate Question: To Hasten or Delay Death — Peter Swanson PhD — Archway Publishing
The Emergent Leader: A Guide to Brand Building, Leadership, and Self-Mastery — Don Gregori — Torchflame Books
Turning Skills Into Dumb Luck: Skills and Mindset for the Times of the Fourth Industrial Revolution — Simon Vine — Archway Publishing
To Strong For Your Own Good: Success With Soul — Anette DeMattio — Self
Stories That Heal: How to Write Life-Inspired Short Stories for Growth, Inspiration, and Uplift — Eugen Rosu — Capricorn Publishing

Health & Wellness

WINNER

Naked Ultra — Craig Ohlau — self published

Business / Finance

WINNER

Climb Greater Heights: How to Accelerate Your Business Growth, Amplify Your Success, and Build a Legacy of Significance — Tony Jeton Selimi — Balboa Press, A Division of Hay House

FINALISTS

Strategy Is Attitude: The Missing Half of Strategy — Ganzorig — Ganzorig Strategy School Press

True Crime

WINNER

How Rampage Killers Interpret Their Worlds — S. Lee Funk, Ed.D. — Academica Press

Political

WINNER

Platonomy: Ancient Wisdom for the Modern SELF — Chester H. Sunde Psy.D. — Archway Publishing

FINALISTS

Almost — Matthew Cooper — Xlibris Us

Science / Nature

WINNER

Unwinding the Imprints of Disease: Transforming Intergenerational and Transgenerational Trauma — Leah K. Hollon ND MPH — Balboa Press

FINALISTS

Lena: Silver Queen of the Gilded Age — Christine Stoiber Fahlund — Archway Publishing

History

WINNER

America's Nightmare: Surviving The Black Holocaust — Michael James — HOPE (Helping Oppressed People Emerge)

FINALISTS

Black Woman: The Quintessential Embodiment of Hope — Michael James — HOPE (Helping Oppressed People Emerge)

Parenting & Family

WINNER

Wisdom from My Grandmothers: how messages from the past shed light on your life today — Jo Ann Fawcett — Dragonhill Books

FINALISTS

The Autism Renaissance: A Journey with thousands of Autistic Souls — Dr. Alptekin Aydin — AuthorHouse UK

HAL...lelujah: A Mother's Story of Love, Loss and Faith Through it All — Jane Brown — WestBow Press
Will My Haircut Hurt? — Martha Goldner — Xlibris Us

Religion / Spirituality (Nonfiction)

WINNER

Sustained: grieving in the hands of Jesus a devotional account of learning to live and hold onto faith in the midst of loss — Hanna Marmalich — WestBow Press

FINALISTS

Leading with Grace: Faith-Inspired Principles for Empowering Leadership — Jeremiah Burke, M.S. — Archway Publishing

I'm on Assignment! - An Alternate View of Past Lives, The Impact on Our Current Lives, Soul Mates, World History, and the Akashic Records — Diane Marie Taylor — AuthorHouse

He Has Made Me Glad: How God selects and beautifies His bride, the church, and her response to His great love — Vicki Lyle Potter — Westbow Press

The greatest love: God's Revelation to John for the World — Marilyn O. Flower — Westbow Press

The Birth of the Messiah: A December Devotional — Steve Laureanti — WestBow Press

Really, God-Guatemala? — Vicki Augustiniak RN — AuthorHouse

The Story of my Soul — Helen P. P. Slater — Balboa Press UK

Which god is God?: A Lawyer's Look at God and Religion — Adrian J. Adams Esq — WestBow Press

GRACE to birth REVIVAL: POWER OF GOD IS FOUND IN THE SECRET PLACE — Ric Steininger — Xlibris AU
Russia's Final Destination: Russia, Israel, and the End of Times — Abraham DeAlmeida PhD — WestBow Press
Little Sermons That I Have Seen — Virgil R. Lee — WestBow Press

Humor

WINNER

The Adventures of Birdfrog: A Beautifully illustrated book of the in-between world of Birdfrog — Robert LoDolce — ArchwayPublishing

FINALISTS

When a Catholic Gets a Lutheran Pregnant — Jennifer Radtke — AuthorHouse

Sports Book

WINNER

Forward—Giving Up is Not an Option: Making My Way into My New World with Wheelchair and Hand Bike — Eugen Ehrenberg — Balboa Press

POETRY CATEGORIES

BOOK OF THE YEAR

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press

Poetry (General)

WINNER

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press

FINALISTS

Opportunity — William Tucker — Archway Publishing
The Excellent Choice — Cotton Bain — Archway Publishing

Narrative Poetry

WINNER

Go in Peace — Theodore McDowell — Kelsay Books

FINALISTS

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press
The Killer Is Me: A Poetic Diary — Mickey Helms — self-published

Experimental Poetry

WINNER

Letters to my Dog — Scott Tomlinson — Xlibris Au

Political Poetry

WINNER

Second Thoughts: Poem and Passages — John Yurechko — iUniverse

FINALISTS

Live Free or Diet: A Holistic Guide to Finding Faith, Freedom, and Abundant Life — Kurt Bravata M.D. —
WestBow Press

Spiritual Poetry

WINNER

Stained Glass Tainted by Dementia — Theodore McDowell — Outskirts Press

Nature Poetry

WINNER

Under the Pink Moon — Mark Rose — Balboa Press

FINALISTS

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press

YA Poetry

WINNER

The Trail To Twilight For The Gods: And Epic Martial Mystery — Ben Klotz — AuthorHouse

SPECIAL CATEGORIES

BOOK OF THE YEAR

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC

Best Debut Book

WINNER

Beneath The Rings — Joe Battaglia — Franklin Publishers

FINALISTS

Ninety-Nine Fire Hoops — Allison Hong Merrill — She Writes Press

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC

Alexandra Elinsky — Girl Grit — n/a

Escala's Wish: An action-adventure, unusual romantasy filled with banter, light humor, and real-life emotion (Tales of Valla) — David James — Trash Panda Publishing

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press

Black and White Smoke- C-Suite Woes: Subtlety has Limits — Thomas Vincent Papa — n/a

Heroes of Another Age — B.L. Mostyn — BookBaby

The Seven — Igor Stefanovic — Igor Stefanovic

Defenders of Zzzodd: Dreamers Return — Ty E. Smith — Spines

ORION: Heavenfall — Corey Frazier — n/a

The Third Estate Secrets of the Manor — D. R. Berlin — self published

Best Indie-Published Book

WINNER

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC

FINALISTS

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press

THE DRUID'S TATTOO — James Gregory Kingston — n/a

Best Self-Published Book

WINNER

Black and White Smoke- C-Suite Woes: Subtlety has Limits — Thomas Vincent Papa — self published

FINALISTS

The Affinity Theory: The Affinity Saga Book 1 — Eddie Dee Williams — self published

The Third Estate Secrets of the Manor — D. R. Berlin — self published

Best Book Series

WINNER

Next Time — M. Jacqueline Murray — Self - Author imprint - Cole Jacobs Books
Bubbles in Spring (Seasons with Bubble Girl series) — Wanda Carter Roush — Ella's Pearl Publishing

Best Illustrated Book

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press

Best Cover Design

WINNER

All the Moonlight on Earth — Jesse Muehlbauer — Allaire Publishing LLC

FINALISTS

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press

Best Cross-Genre Book

WINNER

The KEAK Anthology: A Collection of Short Stories and Much More — Dr. Katherine E.A. Korkidis —
Independently published

FINALISTS

ORION: Heavenfall — Corey Frazier — n/a
Next Time — M. Jacqueline Murray — Self - Author imprint - Cole Jacobs Books
The Art of Obsession — Douglas J. Ostling — Cryptic Glyph Press

Best Genre Fiction

WINNER

ORION: Heavenfall — Corey Frazier — n/a

Best Senior Author

WINNER

My Good Life — Dr. Gregory M. Lee — The Paper House

FINALISTS

Running As Fast As I Can — John David Graham — Don Quixote Press, LLC
Go in Peace — Theodore McDowell — Kelsay Books

Exits — Stephen C. Pollock — Windtree Press
Polar Deception — Barbara Hanson Clark — Prairie Shadow Press LLC