

Massachusetts Center for the Book announces 2025 Book Award winners

By Isabella Bernstein

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The Massachusetts Center for the Book has announced seven winners of the 2025 Massachusetts Book Awards.

The Center, the Massachusetts wing of a national nonprofit that promotes reading and unrestricted access to literature, honored authors of work in five longstanding categories: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, middle-grade/young adult, and picture books. Two new categories were added this year, offering prizes for graphic novel creation, as well as notable contributions to publishing awarded to publishing houses.

An awards ceremony will take place at the State House on Oct. 7 honoring the winners, who will receive a prize of \$1,000. The awards will be presented by Mass. legislators, who have yet to be announced.

"Our state is incredibly invested in supporting this community," said Courtney Andree, the executive director of Massachusetts Center for the Book. "It's not something you see in other places where books are being silenced and banned."

The awards began in 2000 and are meant to highlight writers who represent Massachusetts communities in new and pertinent ways.

Authors can win the award more than once, but this year's crop of recipients are all first-time winners.

While 2025 marks the first year graphic novels had their own award, there have been a growing number of graphic novel submissions in recent years, according to Andree.

Jarrett Krosoczka, of Northampton, won the biennial prize for graphic novels with "Sunshine: How One Camp Taught Me About Life, Death, and Hope," an autobiographical recounting of his experiences as a 16-year-old counselor at Maine's Camp Sun-



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Heather Treseler, a professor of American literature and creative writing at Worcester State, was honored in the poetry category.

shine for children with life-threatening illnesses.

Krosoczka has created 46 graphic novels during his career (you might recognize his "Lunch Lady" series' characters from Boston Logan's Kidport play area in Terminal C). Krosoczka's previous autobiographical graphic novel, "Hey, Kiddo: How I Lost My Mother, Found My Father, and Dealt With Family Addiction," was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2018.

He said winning the award was gratifying in part because creating "Sunshine" felt like a creative risk. He said it was nice to see the artform recognized outside of the con-

finer of superhero comics.

"I want to share with readers the power of volunteerism," Krosoczka said. "I've already heard of Camp Sunshine getting a number of new volunteers from the young readers who picked up 'Sunshine.'"

Heather Treseler, a professor of American literature and creative writing at Worcester State University, won this year's prize in poetry. Her collection, "Auguries & Divinations: Poems" a coming of age story tracing a young woman's complex discovery of herself and womanhood, is Treseler's first full-length book.

Treseler, whose father worked as an English teacher at Dedham High School during her youth, has always been an avid reader and writer of poetry.

"I was always drawn to the musicality of language and the power of a well-told story," she said.

Treseler cites late New England poets Anne Sexton and Maxine Kumin as her inspiration, and uses them as characters and voices in the collection.

The collection took her over eight years to perfect. She attributes part of the win to the timeliness of its story.

"It celebrates love in its many forms, and by extension, the freedom to choose who we love and how we express ourselves as artists," Treseler said.

Other winners include Kellie Carter Jackson for the prize in nonfiction, Jedediah Berry for the prize in fiction, Linda Booth Sweeney for the prize for picture books, Robin Wasley for the prize in middle-grade/young adult, and Beacon Press for the Notable Contribution to Publishing Prize.

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