



DISTINGUISHED WRITERS TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS 2022

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TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS ANNOUNCES FIFTEEN DISTINGUISHED WRITERS TO BE INDUCTED

For the 86th year, members of the Texas Institute of Letters (TIL) have decided on the induction of new members to join the ranks of the distinguished honor society founded in 1936 to celebrate Texas literature and to recognize distinctive literary achievement.

The TIL's membership consists of the state's most respected writers – including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, PEN/Faulkner Award, Academy Award, Americas Award, International Latino Book Award, Lambda Literary Award, MacArthur Fellowship, and Guggenheim Fellowship. Membership is based on ongoing and exceptional literary accomplishment. Members of the Texas Institute of Letters have overwhelmingly approved fifteen writers to join the ranks of the TIL.

The 2022 honorees include fiction and nonfiction writers **Amanda Eyre Ward**, **Frederick Luis Aldama**, and **Shelley Armitage**; award-winning poets **Edward Vidaurre** and **Melissa Studdard**; children's and YA authors **Christina Soontornvat**, **Francisco Stork**, **Don Tate**, **Cynthia Leitich Smith**, **Varian Johnson**, **Jennifer Ziegler**, and **Lupe Ruiz-Flores**; journalist **Carol Flake Chapman**; publisher **Will Evans**; and historian **Catherine Clinton**.

Sergio Troncoso, President of the Texas Institute of Letters states, “The Texas Institute of Letters continues to identify and honor outstanding writers from all literary genres. Our newest members have expanded literary audiences to include diverse voices and readers, and have opened minds with books that reconsider history and scholarship. We are extremely proud of the outstanding work that these writers represent: children's stories full of empathy and humor, poetry that breaks open the heart to imagine new perspectives, prose that challenges narrative forms and explores psychological complexities, and publishing that finds and amplifies voices on the margins of society. These fifteen masters of the word include novelists, short-story writers, poets, memoirists, publishers, children's authors, and scholars.”

New members will be inducted at the upcoming TIL annual meeting and banquet in El Paso, Texas on April 22-23, 2022, which will also include the Annual TIL Literary Awards. For more information and details, please visit the TIL website: www.texasinstituteofletters.org or email Sergio Troncoso, president@texasinstituteofletters.org.

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New 2022 Inductees into the Texas Institute of Letters

Frederick Luis Aldama is the author of over forty books, which he has authored, co-authored, and edited, including *Long Stories Cut Short: Fictions from the Borderlands* and *Latinx Superheroes in Mainstream Comics*, which won the coveted Eisner Award. He holds the Jacob & Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities at the University of Texas at Austin and is founder and director of UT Austin's Latinx Pop Lab. He received his Ph.D. in English at Stanford University and has written on Mexican cinema, multicultural comics, children's and young adult literature, pop culture, art, humor, cognitive studies and reading, neurobiology and parenting, and the science of storytelling.



Shelley Armitage is the author of nine books, including *Walking the Llano: A Texas Memoir of Place* and *Bones Incandescent: The Pajarito Journals of Peggy Pond Church*. A Fulbright scholar, she has also received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Rockefeller Foundation. In a starred review of *Walking the Llano*, *Kirkus Reviews* said, "An engaging geographer and historian, Armitage takes the pulse of the sacred land spread out before her through luminous memories and photographs, all with an appreciative eye and a nod toward its untapped ecological splendor." She is professor emerita of English and American Studies at the University of Texas at El Paso.



A Texas native, **Carol Flake Chapman** is the author of *Wild Surprises: Stories and Poems About Encounters That Shifted My World*, *New Orleans: Behind the Masks of America's Most Exotic City*, and *Redemptorama: Culture, Politics, and the New Evangelicalism*, among other books of nonfiction and poetry. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, and *Texas Monthly*. In 2020, Chapman won the Joy Harjo Poetry Prize, returning to her love of poetry after a career in journalism. She earned her Ph.D. in Modern Poetry at Tulane University and lives in Austin, Texas.



Catherine Clinton is a pioneering historian of the American South and the Civil War. She is the author or editor of 25 books, including *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*, *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*, and *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*. Her books *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* and *Mrs. Lincoln: A Life* are among several that have been History Book Club selections. A Guggenheim fellow, Clinton is the Denman Professor of American History at the University of Texas, San Antonio.



Will Evans is the founder and executive director of Deep Vellum Publishing in Dallas, the publisher of over 91 books from 32 different languages and 50 countries. Deep Vellum also founded La Reunion Publishing, which focuses on the forgotten stories of Texas. In 2021, Deep Vellum acquired the famed Dalkey Archive, with 1000 titles (including works by Aldous Huxley, Carlos Fuentes, Gertrude Stein). Deep Vellum received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and The Community of Literary Magazines and Presses awarded Evans its Golden Colophon Award for Paradigm Independent Literary Publishing. A scholar of Russian letters, he also translated Oleg Kashin's novel *Fardwor, Russia! A Fantastical Tale of Life Under Putin*.



Lupe Ruiz-Flores is the author of six bilingual picture books, including *Let's Salsa / Bailemos salsa*, *Lupita's First Dance / El primer baile de Lupita*, and *The Woodcutter's Gift / El regalo del leñador*. Born and raised in southwest Texas, she is a member of the Society of Children's Writers and Book Illustrators and served as the regional advisor for the Southwest Texas Chapter, inviting speakers and organizing craft workshops for writers. Ruiz-Flores has also published poetry in *Voices Along the River*, *San Antonio Express-News*, and *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*. She was an engineering technician with the Department of Defense until her retirement in 1999.



Varian Johnson is the award-winning author of twelve books, including *Playing the Cards You're Dealt*, *Twins*, and *The Parker Inheritance*. His books have won the Coretta Scott King Author Honor and Boston Globe/Horn Book Honor awards. In 2021, *Playing the Cards You're Dealt* received starred reviews from *Kirkus Reviews*, *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *School Library Journal*. *The New York Times*: "Johnson is a wonderful storyteller whose humor is poignant and refreshing." A resident of Austin and a civil engineer by training, Johnson received his MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts and is now a member of the faculty.



Cynthia Leitich Smith is the 2021 NSK Neustadt Laureate and a *New York Times* bestselling author of books for young readers, including *Hearts Unbroken*, which won the American Indian Library Association's Youth Literature Award. Her 2021 releases are the middle grade anthology *Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids* and the novel *Sisters of the Neversea*, both of which received starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Publishers Weekly*. She also wrote *Jingle Dancer*, *The Blue Stars*, the *Feral* and *Tantalize* book series, *Indian Shoes*, and *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*. A citizen of the Muscogee Creek Nation, Leitich Smith teaches at the Vermont College of Fine Arts MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults. She lives in Austin.



Christina Soontornvat is the author of over a dozen books for children and young adults, including *The Ramble Shamble Children*, *Simon at the Art Museum*, and the *Diary of an Ice Princess* chapter book series. Her recent works include the middle grade fantasy, *A Wish in the Dark*, which was named a 2021 Newbery Honor Book and was chosen as Best Book of the Year by *The Washington Post* and *School Library Journal*. *All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team* received the 2021 Kirkus Prize for Young People's Literature and was also named a 2021 Newbery Honor Book. She lives in Austin.



Francisco Stork is the author of nine novels—mostly for young adults, and often set in Texas and the border of El Paso/Juárez—including *On the Hook*, *Disappeared*, and *The Memory of Light*, which was praised by *Kirkus Reviews* in a starred review: “Stork further marks himself as a major voice in teen literature by delivering one of his richest and most emotionally charged novels yet.” He has won the TIL’s young adult book award *twice*, the Tomás Rivera Book Award, the Schneider Family Book Award, and the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award. A graduate of Columbia Law School, Stork practiced law for decades before retiring and focusing on his work as a writer.



Melissa Studdard is the author of five books, including *I Ate the Cosmos*, *Six Weeks to Yehidah*, *Like a Bird with a Thousand Wings*, and *Dear Selection Committee*. She has won the Forward National Literature Award, Kathak Literary Award, Poiesis Award of Honor International, and two Pinnacle Book Achievement Awards. Her work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Psychology Today*, *The Guardian*, *Harvard Review*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Poets & Writers*. Executive producer and host of VIDA Voices and Views: Women in the Literary Arts, Studdard received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and is Professor of English in the Lone Star College system.



Don Tate is the author and illustrator of over seventeen books for children, including *William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad*, *Pigskins to Paintbrushes: The Story of Football-Playing Artist Ernie Barnes*, and *Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton*, which won the TIL’s award for best picture book for children. Tate has also won Ezra Jack Keats Book Award *twice* and the Christopher Award. His books have been listed on Bank Street College’s Best Children’s Books of the Year and the American Library Association’s Notable Children’s Books. He is the founding host of *The Brown Bookshelf*, a blog expanding opportunities for Black authors writing for young readers. He lives in Austin.



Poet Laureate of McAllen, **Edward Vidaurre** is the author of eight books, including *Pandemia & Other Poems*, *Beautiful Scars: Elegiac Beat Poems*, and *JazzHouse*, which won the Poetry Award from the Philosophical Society of Texas. For his *Cry, Howl: Poems* (published in January of 2022), Naomi Shihab Nye said: “A stunning poet of magnificent humanity! His poems take my breath away.” He is also the publisher of FlowerSong Press and Juventud Press, which nurture essential books from and about the borderlands. Originally from Boyle Heights, California and living in McAllen for over two decades, Vidaurre has published work in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Texas Observer*, *The Acentos Review*, and *Cutthroat*.



Amanda Eyre Ward is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Sleep Toward Heaven*, *How to Be Lost*, *Love Stories in This Town*, *Forgive Me*, *Close Your Eyes*, *The Same Sky*, *The Nearness of You*, and *The Jetsetters*. Ward’s work has been optioned for film and television and translated into fifteen languages. *The New York Times* on *The Jetsetters*: “There is real poignancy in this novel, as wounded characters struggle to regain childhood loyalties. Ward nails how family expeditions are ruined and saved, over and over again, by fleeting moments of connection and the consensus to survive without killing one another.” She lives in Austin.



A lifelong resident of Texas, **Jennifer Ziegler** is the author of twenty-five books for children and young adults, including *Worser*, *Revenge of the Flower Girls*, and *How Not to Be Popular*. Her work has won the Texas Library Association’s Spirit of Texas Award and International Reading Association’s Young Adults’ Choice Award. From *New York Times* bestselling author and TIL member Kathi Appelt on Ziegler’s novel *Worser*: “Quite simply, a work of genius. That’s how I would describe both Jennifer Ziegler’s young hero and his story.” She serves as faculty co-chair of Vermont College of Fine Arts’ MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults.

