



TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2025 LITERARY AWARDS

The Texas Institute of Letters has announced the winners of the twelve Annual TIL Literary Awards. This year, TIL will award these writers and two other recipients a total of \$39,000 in prizes at the TIL Awards Ceremony in Brownsville, Texas, on April 26, 2025.

The Texas Institute of Letters is a nonprofit Honor Society founded in 1936 to celebrate Texas literature and recognize distinctive literary achievement. The TIL's elected membership consists of the state's most respected writers—including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, PEN/Faulkner Award, Man Booker Prize, Academy Award, International Latino Book Award, Americas Award, Lambda Literary Award, MacArthur Fellowship, and Guggenheim Fellowship.

From President David Bowles: "Each year, the TIL recognizes the best of Texas writing in a variety of genres that includes fiction, poetry, nonfiction, scholarly writing, translation, and short form works. Many thanks to our judges for carefully considering the entries. This year's winners demonstrate the extraordinary talent and diversity of writers with Texas roots. Celebrating their achievements is a highlight of our annual conference, and we are so grateful for the opportunity to recognize and support the best of Texas literature."

The winners of the 2025 TIL Literary Awards are Bret Anthony Johnston, Marcela Fuentes, James Aalan Bernsen, Sasha West, Eduardo Martínez-Leyva, David Ponton III, Jonny Garza Villa, Lyla Lee, Laekan Zea Kemp, Kristie Lee, Patrick Font, and Dylan Baddour. Alongside them twenty-six honor-winners were selected. All awards are for works published in 2024.

During the banquet weekend, Elizabeth Crook will receive the Texas Institute of Letters' prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, our highest honor. The TIL will also induct thirty-two new members for 2025: Philip Boehm, Sharon Bridgforth, e.E. Charlton-Trujillo, Sean Cotter, Rodney Crowell, Susan Fletcher, J. Bruce Fuller, Bryan A. Garner, Robert L. Girón, John Morán González, Jessica Goudeau, Babette Fraser Hale, Gerald Horne, Fady Joudah, Jennifer Lawson, Lyle Lovett, Lupe Méndez, Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton, Laurence Musgrove, Rena Pederson, John Pipkin, Andrew Porter, Octavio Quintanilla, David Romo, Robert Schenckan, Martha Serpas, Chris Tomlinson, Alexandra Vandekamp, Katy Vine, LaToya Watkins, Randall Watson, and Monica Youn. Newly inducted members will read from their work on April 25 and 26 in Brownsville.

For more information on the TIL or the April 26th awards ceremony, contact David Bowles, president@texasinstituteofletters.org, or visit the TIL website at www.texasinstituteofletters.org.

THE 2025 TIL AWARD- AND HONOR-WINNERS

Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Book of Fiction

Award-winner: *We Burn Daylight* by Bret Anthony Johnston

Honor-winners: *New Testaments* by Dagoberto Gilb

The Bullet Swallower by Elizabeth Gonzalez James



Sergio Troncoso Award for Best First Book of Fiction

Award-winner: *Malas* by Marcela Fuentes

Honor-winners: *Sleepaway: A Novel* by Kevin Prufer

Linh Ly Is Doing Just Fine by Thao Votang



Carr P. Collins Award for Best Book of Nonfiction

Award-winner: *The Lost War for Texas* by James Aalan Bernsen

Honor-winners: *The Price They Paid*, by Jeff Forret

10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People: A Groundbreaking Approach to Leading the Next Generation—And Making Your Own Life Easier by David Yeager



Burdine C. Johnson Award for Best Book of Poetry

Award-winner: *How to Abandon Ship* by Sasha West

Honor-winners: *Autobiomythography* by Ayonkunle Falomo

The Book of Wounded Sparrows by Octavio Quintanilla

the eaters of flowers by ire'ne lara silva



Texas Institute of Letters Award for First Book of Poetry

Award-winner: *Cowboy Park* by Eduardo Martínez-Leyva

Honor-winners: *Cloud Missives* by Kenzie Allen

How to Drown a Boy by J. Bruce Fuller

How to Kill a Goat & Other Monsters by Saúl

Hernández



Texas Institute of Letters Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book

Award-winner: *Houston and the Permanence of Segregation: An Afropessimist Approach to Urban History* by David Ponton III



Jean Flynn Award for Best Young Adult Book

Award-winner: *Canto Contigo* by Jonny Garza Villa

Honor-winners: *Through Fences* by Frederick Aldama

*Pint-sized Pioneers: Taming the Frontier,
One Chore at a Time* by Preston Lewis
and Harriet Kocher Lewis



Deirdre Siobhan FlynnBass Award for Best Middle Grade Book

Award-winner: *Gigi Shin is Not a Nerd* by Lyla Lee

Honor-winners: *Los Monstruos: Rooster and the Dancing
Diablo* by Diana Lopez

*The Minor Miracle: The Amazing Adventures of
Noah Minor* by Meredith Davis

On a Wing and a Tear by Cynthia Leitich Smith



Brigid Erin Flynn Award for Best Picture Book

Award-winner: *Desert Song* by Laekan Zea Kemp

Honor-winners: *A Garland of Henna* by Varsha Bajaj

Miguel Must Fight by Jamie Ofelia

A Maleta Full of Treasures by Natalia Sylvester



Fred Whitehead Award for Best Design of a Trade Book

Award-winner: *The Art of Texas State Parks: A Centennial Celebration, 1923–2023*, designed by Kristie Lee

Honor-winners: *Power: How the Electric Co-op Movement Energized the Lone Star State*, designed by Laura Forward Long

Cerveza Songs by Reyes Ramírez

Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story

Award-winner: “All B’s and One C” by Patrick Font

Honor-winners: “Time of the Preacher” by Brett Anthony Johnston

Edwin "Bud" Shrake Award for Best Short Nonfiction

Award-winner: “Forgotten Keepers of the Rio Grande Delta” by Dylan Baddour

Honor-winners: “Waves Through the World” by Joshua Forehand

“The Immortal Life of ’80 Joe” by Kip Stratton

“The Juror Who Found Herself Guilty” by Michael Hall

