

KATIE SHANAHAN

NEGATIVE POSITIVITY:

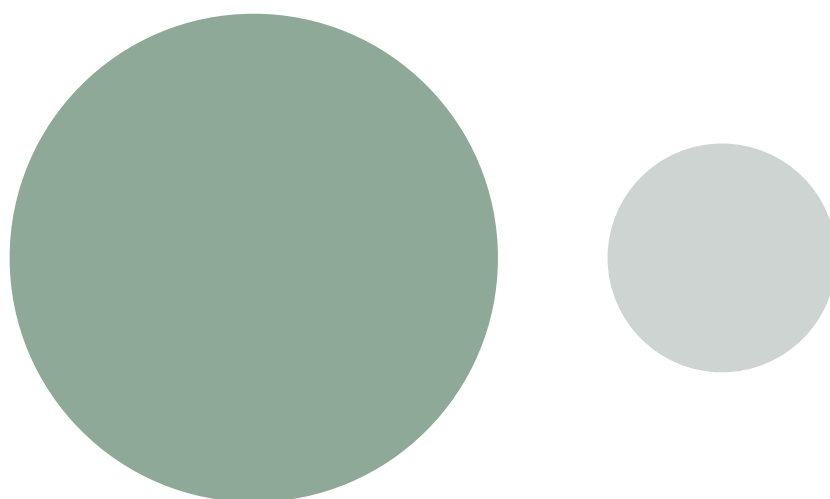
Book Prize Success,
Audience Response and
Literary Value

KEYWORDS:

LITERARY PRIZES, BOOKER, LITERARY VALUE, AWARDS, GOODREADS

ABSTRACT

Literary prizes purport to honour 'superior' authors and their works, judging which books are 'the best' in a given year and announcing it for the world to react to. Whilst it is widely assumed that monetarily winning a prize is a good thing, previous studies have noted what appears to be a negative correlation between prize success and audience response. Continuing on from findings in Kovács and Sharkey's quantitative study of three prestigious literary awards (2014), this article reports on a comparative, mixed methods study of a wider range of book prizes, including more commercial and genre-specific awards. It explores the ways in which contemporary prize data can highlight the oxymoronic phenomenon of negative positivity. The research comprises quantitative analysis of the effects of different book prizes on book sales and on star ratings on Goodreads, and qualitative analysis of popular reviews of prize-winning novels. The article aims to illuminate and comparatively analyse the effects of different prizes on audience response and to consider how this may contribute to literary value.



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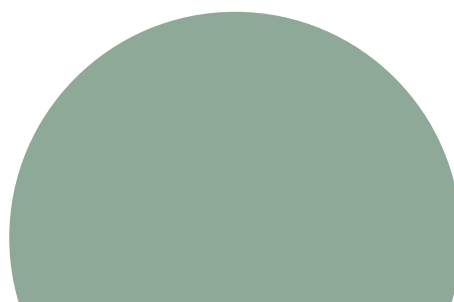
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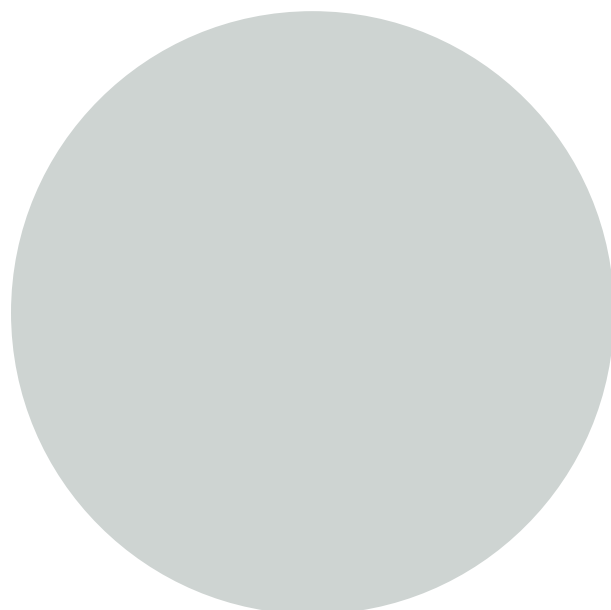


Author biography

Katie Shanahan

Author Katie Shanahan conducted the majority of this research whilst completing her master's degree in Publishing at UCL. Following studies in English and American literature, she developed an interest in the publishing industry and in particular the motions of attributing value to certain books and not to others. She is currently working with academic publisher Taylor & Francis as a submission coordinator, aiding academics and researchers to release their findings and make knowledge more accessible.

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FULL ARTICLE

Author Thomas Shapcott remarks that, “many a book that might have been in danger of sinking into the morass of publishers’ back-lists have been saved because of an award”.¹ Winning a prize appears to be a positive event for authors, publishers and bookshops, whilst showing audiences that something has been judged of good quality.² So why, then, did this study discover that upon reception of the Women’s Prize for Fiction in 2015, positive reviews for *How To Be Both* by Ali Smith deteriorated at approximately 30%, when compared to post-publication figures? Why did *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood invoke such a strong sense of disappointment in reviews that followed her Booker win announcement?

There are many potential explanations for the negative consequences garnered by literary prize winning.³ There are always contradictions concerning “literary value, taste and judgement, or representation and gatekeeping”.⁴ There are sociological rationalisations to consider, or it could simply be that the UK is dealing with “a literary culture that is not very comfortable with prizes”.⁵ In order to consider all angles of the oxymoronic phenomenon of negative winning, two hypotheses will be considered. Firstly,

1. Following the announcement of a short-list nomination or a prize win, book sales for the winner will increase and positive reviews will decrease.

Gathering credible data will help to determine whether the above statement occurs on only a few occasions, as with *How To Be Both*, or is a repeating affair. After this is ascertained the discussion about why this happens can occur. Following this analysis, the concurrent part of this study may transpire, stemming from a second hypothesis:

2. Sales figures and reader reactions have potential to be determined by the particular literary prize.

Direct comparisons between different awards are rare within literary prize research. There is the potential for nuanced discoveries regarding preconceptions attached to various awards and how those in turn alter the reading experience individually.

1 Thomas Shapcott, ‘Literary Life: Prizes, Anthologies, Festivals, Reviewing, Grants’ in *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, ed. by Steven Earnshaw, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 494-502 (p. 494). Jstor ebooks.

2 C. J. Van Rees, ‘How Reviewers Reach Consensus on the Value of Literary Works’, *Poetics*, 16.3-4 (1987), 275-294 (p. 280) <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/0304422X87900088>> [accessed 22 May 2020].

3 ‘PRIZE’ and ‘AWARD’ are used interchangeably throughout when referring to literary accolades. For the purposes of this article, there is no difference in definition.

4 Claire Squires, ‘Book Marketing and the Booker Prize’ in *Judging a Book by its Cover: Fans, Publishers, Designers, and the Marketing of Fiction*, eds. Nickianne Moody and Nicole Matthews, 1st edn (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 85-97 (p. 300). Oxford Brookes University ebooks.

5 James English, ‘The Literary Prize Phenomenon in Context’, in *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel, 1945-2000*, ed. by Brian Shaffer (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), pp. 160-176 (p. 165). ProQuest ebooks.

The most recent, data-driven research into this phenomenon took place in 2014 by Kovács and Sharkey, who analysed how specific prestigious literary awards impacted upon the reader-perceived popularity of prize winners and shortlisted nominees.⁶ Reviews were taken from online platform Goodreads and comparisons between sales figures and star ratings were presented in order to highlight the positive correlations that occurred between both increasing sales figures and the time following a prize win, and negative reviews in the same time period. The conclusion identified that “status creates the presumption of higher quality”.⁷ Whilst a conclusion was drawn and applied to literary prizes as a whole, only the Booker was studied extensively. This can be expanded upon alongside a continuation of Booker research following the year 2011, thus allowing for more contemporary data.

Reading and buying habits alter annually, demonstrated in the two million more books that were purchased throughout the UK in 2018 when compared to 2014.⁸ This is in addition to the dramatic rise in e-book purchasing, increasing in sales at 397% from 2014 to 2019; e-books allowing for easier access to reading and therefore to discovering new prize winners.⁹ Due to innovative technology and education, more people are reading and therefore following literary prizes, whether through active choice or via acknowledging a ‘winner’ sticker on the front of a book and letting that alter their decision to purchase.¹⁰ The prizes selected for this study would need to be diverse, prestigious and reasonably well-known.¹¹ Since with Nielsen data only UK stores are considered, only UK-based awards will be chosen.¹² Those prizes are: The Booker Prize, The International Booker prize, The Women’s Prize for Fiction, The Arthur C. Clarke Award (fiction) and The Costa Book Awards (fiction). Through this list there are genre-specific prizes, translated works

6 Balázs Kovács and Amanda Sharkey, ‘The Paradox of Publicity: How Awards can Negatively Affect the Evaluation of Quality’, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 59.1 (2014), 1-33. <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0001839214523602>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

7 Kovács and Sharkey, p. 3.

8 Nielsen BookScan (2020), <https://online.nielsenbookscan.net/ibmcognos/cgi-bin/cognos.cgi?b_action=xts.run&m=portal/cc.xts&gohome=>> [accessed 4 June 2020].

9 Publisher’s Association, *The PA Statistics Yearbook 2014* (2015), <<https://www.publishers.org.uk/publications/the-pa-statistics-yearbook-2014/>> [accessed 29 July 2020]; Publisher’s Association, *Purchase “The Publisher’s Association Yearbook 2019”* (2020), <https://www.publishers.org.uk/product/publishers-association-yearbook-2019/?utm_source=Yearbook&utm_campaign=651099ffbf-Email+to+non-members+YB19&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_68087f4ca2-651099ffbf-590582705&mc_cid=651099ffbf&mc_eid=25433bfa95> [accessed 29 July 2020].

10 Gérard Genette, ‘Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 7. Cambridge University ebooks.

11 Prestigious: “having, showing, or conferring prestige or high-status; inspiring respect and admiration”; ‘Prestigious’, in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/150873>> [accessed 10 August 2020].

12 Awards that are open to other countries and nationalities are recognised (ie. the Booker), so long as they are UK-based.

and arguably the most prestigious from within the UK. Prize data will concern the previous six years.

Literary prizes are “consumer’s guides” and it can be inferred that “measures of quality” will continue to push readers in the direction of winners.¹³ If prizes are having any kind of negative impact upon the discourse surrounding the winners though, are they the most sustainable or foremost methods of acknowledging literary superiority after all? Works such as Street’s *Showbusiness of a Serious Kind* and Auguscik’s *Prizing Debate* seek to explore the negative repercussions behind winning a prestigious literary award, with the Booker Prize as primary example, though Auguscik suggests her conclusions are equally applicable to other prizes. Her explanations for negative positivity concern: popularity versus mainstream negativity, how prestige directly affects consumerism and the likeability of the product and disappointment when facing high expectations. Whether her conclusions and explanations affect all prizes will begin to be determined through exploration of hypothesis two.

A mixed methodology of both quantitative and qualitative research will aid in ensuring that comparisons are easier to identify and discuss between the different awards; this mixed method of research was missing from both Kovács and Sharkey’s and Ginsburgh’s similar studies, both of which analysed negative reactions to literary prizes and ended with comparative conclusions.¹⁴ Whilst Kovács and Sharkey discovered this positive correlation between book prizes and increasing economic value, Ginsburgh concluded that literary prizes are not always the deciders of cultural value and longevity of book-life; winners were not determined to be more economically successful than shortlisted works. Further research into this largely unexplored area is needed in order to validate (or invalidate) past research as well as to continue with fresh comparative results.

Psychological and sociological explanations can be considered to explain this negative positivity, including those explored in the similarly themed articles from Sauder and others (relating high status to a social construct that is distrusted by the masses), and Simcoe and Waguespack (how uncertainty in an author’s value can lead to readers deferring to the wider audience for social cues); positivity and popularity do not always work in the favour of the prize-winning author.¹⁵

13 Richard Todd, *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) p. 71.; Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate: The Fourth Decade of the Booker Prize and the Contemporary Novel in the UK*, (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014), p. 12. UCL ebook.

14 Victor Ginsburgh, ‘Awards, Success and Aesthetic Quality in the Arts’, *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17.2 (2003), pp. 99-111. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3216859.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search%2Fcontrol&refreqid=search%3Adb958017b5382ad94083634e044b2909> [accessed 2 June 2020].

15 Michael Sauder, Freda Lynn and Joel Podolny, ‘Status: Insights from Organizational Sociology’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38.1 (2012), pp. 267-283. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23254596?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search%2Fcontrol&refreqid=search%3A38d03108a6d0aa07ac89f02b2da5c954 [accessed 22 May 2020].;

Beck and Akbari also provide key theory regarding the human habit of 'popular safety', detailing how feelings of safety are often entwined with the conception of popularity, no matter if the opinion is positive or negative.¹⁶

James English expands upon theories by Bourdieu in his *The Economy of Prestige*, referencing journalistic capital and the ways in which the media alters audience conception.¹⁷ English claims that from within the literary prize sphere, there is always going to be a "single loser emerging from a congested field of winners", suggesting that the negative reactions outlay the benefits for prize-winners.¹⁸

Across all of the aforementioned studies, it is clear that there are certain negative responses to prize winning, whether caused by sociological responses to the stimuli of a prize-winner or media-driven reactions. Whether or not the negatives are all-encompassing enough to outstrip the benefits is to be determined.

METHODOLOGY

In order to analyse both the potential rise in sales and the rise in negative reviews, quantitative research can be split into two sections: numerical sales data from Nielsen BookScan and numerical review data from Goodreads.

The sales data from Nielsen BookScan was gathered in four groups for each book title: post-release, post-longlist (LL), post-shortlist (SL) and post-win. These figures were collected from as close to a month past the listed dates as possible. There are certain limitations to this since these dates do not always align perfectly with the Nielsen period end-dates from which the data is stored. Nielsen BookScan also cannot logistically include every single sale from every bookshop; e-sales are difficult to monitor with companies such as Amazon declining to share their data.¹⁹

Timothy Simcoe and Dave Waguespack, 'Status, Quality and Attention: What's in a (Missing) Name?', *Management Science*, 57.2 (2011), pp. 274-290. <https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/stable/41060717?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents> [accessed 25 May 2020].

16 Julie Beck, 'The Complex Psychology of Why We Like Things: How Do You Account for Taste?', *The Atlantic*, 16 May 2016. <<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/05/the-complex-psychology-of-why-people-like-things/482196/>> [accessed 14 May 2020].; Anna Akbari, 'Why it's Cool to be Unpopular: Why You Should Lean into Unpopularity', *Psychology Today*, 17 April 2018. <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/startup-your-life/201804/why-its-cool-be-unpopular>> [accessed 14 May 2020].

17 James English, 'The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value' (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). Shibboleth ebooks.

18 English, 2008, p. 18.

19 *Amazon Author Central* (2020), <<https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?topicID=200580390>> [Accessed 6 July 2020].

Book	Author	Prize	Pub	LL	SL	Win	% Difference Pub to Win
<i>Celestial Bodies</i>	Jokha Alharthi	International	10 (23)	477 (38)	888 (39)	6,578 (25)	65680%
<i>Flights</i>	Olga Tokarczuk	International	286 (31)	437 (40)	838 (37)	3,070 (25)	973.43%
<i>A Horse Walks Into A Bar</i>	David Grossman	International	962 (23)	198 (39)	291 (30)	8,405 (31)	773.70%
<i>The Vegetarian</i>	Han Kang	International	108 (23)	1,521 (44)	3,737 (37)	15,691 (30)	14428.70%

Table 1 - International Booker Sales Data: demonstrating the number of days for data collection are not always equal (the numbers in brackets for each column)

Since it is understood that for a new book the key sales period is about two to six weeks from publication, the same time period of one month post-SL or post-win was used when gathering review data from the site Goodreads.²⁰ It was acknowledged that there was a potential for external factors to influence the data beyond that of the prize win; factors such as prize/author controversies, the book in question being a sequel and also the achievement of winning multiple other awards as well as the one being studied. The short time period of data collection helped to alleviate any later controversies or media attention to books that may change ratings, such as 2018 Costa Award winner, Sally Rooney's novel *Normal People*, which was adapted into a television show in 2020.²¹

It is worth acknowledging that controversy and adaptations are not the only limitations to this method of analysis. Goodreads is an international site, accepting reviews from anywhere and anyone in the world. Nielsen is specific to the UK. In order to combat this as much as possible, any reviews that were not written in English were omitted from the data. Once the number of books sold across all four

²⁰ John Thompson, *Merchants of Culture*, 2nd edn, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015) p. 266.

²¹ Dwight Garner and others, 'Bringing "Normal People" to Sexy, Soundtracked Life', *The New York Times*, 15 May 2020. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/15/books/normal-people-sally-rooney-hulu-adaptation.html>> [accessed 12 August 2020].

sections were accounted for, a percentage difference from post-publication to post-win was calculated, thus highlighting a point of potential causation for how the award in question has altered the economic value of the book.

Three control groups, collecting data for books of the same genre and published in the same month, other shortlisted entries and other works by the winning authors, were also compared to the primary data in order to eliminate alterations by external sources.

Book	Author	Prize	Comparing to	Pub	Win	% Diff Pub to Win	Comparison %
<i>Gould's Book of Fish</i> (13.03.03)	Richard Flanagan	Booker	<i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i>	5,423 (37)	3,677 (46)	-31.26%	1958.78%
<i>Death of a River Guide</i> (12.02.04)	Richard Flanagan	Booker	<i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i>	362 (37)	47 (43)	-87.02%	1958.78%
<i>The Unknown Terrorist</i> (01.02.08)	Richard Flanagan	Booker	<i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i>	1,194 (22)	120 (18)	-89.95%	1958.78%

Table 2 - Control Group 2 example (Non-winners by the Same Author)

For three months (approximately) post-publication, post-SL and post-win, the number of Goodreads reviews (within the top five hundred for each star rating) were counted and the data stored; a close reading approach was utilised for each review. Notes were taken of words concerning key phrases such as 'disappointment' or the names of the prizes and tallied against each time-period of collected data. Overall, 10,685 reviews were counted and analysed. The number of reviews per book varied, from 52 to 860. For this reason, weighted averages of the star ratings for each book and time period were calculated, followed by the percentage difference from publication to win. A variance in the prizes was vital in order to explore hypothesis two through a literary analysis of the wording of certain reviews.

According to literary director Ion Trewin (2006-2015), the Booker prize selects the "best novel in the opinion of the judges" annually.²² It is arguably the most

22 Ion Trewin, *History of the Booker Prize* (2013), <<https://thebookerprizes.com/fiction/history>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

familiar British literary prize, and the most prestigious. It has been claimed that the International Booker Prize “has an interventionist quality- it allows writers to be better known in Britain, and in the English language, than they have been previously”.²³ My prediction was that this prize would introduce the largest crowd of newcomers to titles post-award win, with little or no knowledge of the novel beforehand. This being due to the relatively small audience for translated works, which are a small percentage of UK publishing in the first place.

A more ‘commercial’ prize was required in order to include a different type of novel; the Costa Book Awards (fiction) were designed to offer an “ordinary perspective” and to “sell the kind of (popular) books that the Booker did not value”.²⁴ The prize is still “publicity friendly” and well-known, maybe more so than the Women’s Prize for Fiction and the Arthur C. Clarke Awards, both of which were chosen as a diverse counterpart to the Booker and as a genre-specific award, respectfully.²⁵

FINDINGS

Results with both Nielsen BookScan figures and Goodreads reviews confirmed the first part of hypothesis one: that post-win, sales figures increased.²⁶ Considering the quantitative data first, it is apparent that the correlation between sales and the post-win time period is overwhelmingly positive. Whilst Todd’s conclusion from 1996 is no longer true—“only the Booker and the Whitbread prizes really have any significant impact on fiction sales”—certain literary prizes had more of an impact than others.²⁷ The Costa (Whitbread) actually had the least amount of impact upon sales figures out of the five prizes studied, although it did still show a positive increase with all but two books.²⁸

23 Alison Flood, ‘Olga Tokarczuk’s “Extraordinary” Flights Wins Man Booker international Prize’, *The Guardian*, 22 May 2018. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/may/22/olga-tokarczuk-flights-wins-man-booker-international-prize-polish>> [accessed 3 June 2020].

24 John Ezard, ‘Whitbread Celebs Oust ‘Real Critics’’, *The Guardian*, 15 December 2000. <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/dec/15/whitbreadbookawards2000.costabookaward>> [accessed 8 July 2020] (para 8 of 11).; John Street, “‘Showbusiness of a Serious Kind’: A Cultural Politics of the Arts Prize”, *Media, Culture and Society*, 27.6 (2005), 819-840 (p. 82) <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0163443705057672>> [accessed 20 June 2020]; Richard Todd, *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), p. 823.

25 Squires, p. 67.

26 See Appendices for complete data tables.

27 Todd, p. 62.

28 *Middle England* in 2019 and *How To Be Both* in 2014; See Figure 1.

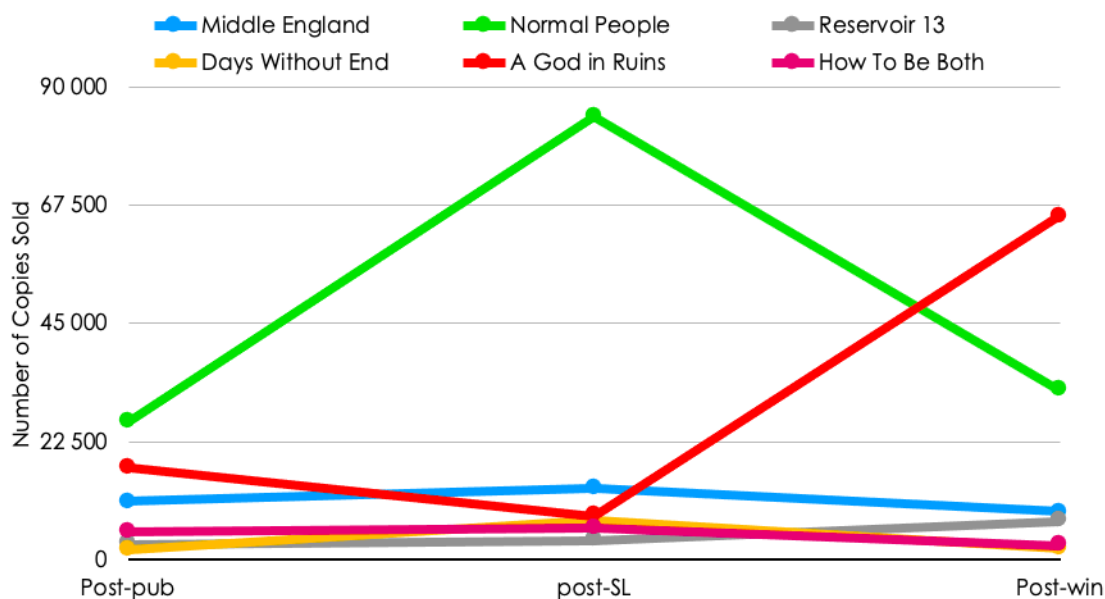


Figure 1 - Costa Book Awards (2014-2019) Sales Figures.

How To Be Both by Ali Smith provided an unusual increase in sales for the month following the shortlist announcement date (17/11/2014), however it had just missed out on a Booker win, having been shortlisted a couple of months sooner (9th September 2014). This research found that a Booker LL or SL nomination often impacted upon sales more so than any other prize win, this being due to the reach of the award reputation-wise, and the marketing strategies employed by publishers post-nomination. This also potentially accounts for the unusual increase in sales for Sally Rooney's *Normal People* after the shortlist nomination. It was nominated for the Booker (LL) in July of the same year. It was also announced as Waterstones Book of the Year in the same month as the SL announcement, accounting for a massive marketing scheme.²⁹ This highlights the reach of the Booker Prize even when compared to other publicised prizes happening simultaneously; limitations are also accentuated, with there being little way of determining whether each Nielsen sale post-win was due to the acknowledgement of an award or a byproduct of the marketing strategies due to the award. Book buyers may have had no idea why the book was being splashed across bookshop windows, thus making it difficult to definitively say that the specific prizes caused audience reactions.

The Booker prize performed effectively (when considering the economic value), averaging an 8986.90% increase in sales from post-publication to post-win.³⁰

²⁹ Clemence Michallon, '“Normal People” by Sally Rooney Named Waterstones Book of the Year', *Independent*, 29 November 2018. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/sally-rooney-normal-people-waterstones-book-year-dublin-ireland-conversations-friends-a8659186.html>> [accessed 15 August 2020] (para 1 of 10).

³⁰ (Across its winners of the last six years); see Table 1.

Prize Winner	Percentage Difference: Post-pub to Post-win Sales
<i>The Testaments</i>	-76.41%
<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>	2101.54%
<i>Milkman</i>	17958.5%
<i>Lincoln in the Bardo</i>	6379.29%
<i>The Sellout</i>	26205.30%
<i>A Brief History of Seven Killings</i>	8380.37%
<i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i>	1958.78%

Table 3 - Booker Prize Sales Data (2014-2019).

The International Booker Prize and the Women's Prize for Fiction were the next most lucrative for sales, with *Celestial Bodies* by Jokha Alharthi achieving the largest increase in sales out of the 35 books included in this data analysis. After its win (International Booker, 2019) it achieved a 65680% increase, driving it from being reasonably unknown to amassing a sizeable following. Other small books made great leaps in sales following an award win and due to the nature of its list being translated works, the International Booker highlights this the best. This potentially demonstrates that literary prizes are far more useful when considering sales increases for smaller, lesser-known authors than for those that are already established. Books that were already popular post-publication did not gain as many sales from the attention of awards.³¹

According to Todd, "Serious literary prizes tend to exclude best-selling genre-fiction categories such as crime or science fiction".³² Although appealing to an audience for only one genre is more niche, the Arthur C. Clarke Award is prestigious within the science-fiction community. It therefore attracts an audience large enough to make a significant impact upon a literary society. There was a positive increase in sales for the winning list, although the amount of gain was some of the most varied when compared to the other prizes studied.³³

Prize Winner	Percentage Difference: Post-pub to Post-win
<i>Rosewater</i>	9891.67%
<i>Dreams Before the Start of Time</i>	3400%
<i>The Underground Railroad</i>	427.17%
<i>Children of Time</i>	100.54%
<i>Station Eleven</i>	10877.70%
<i>Ancillary Justice</i>	938.36%

Table 4 - Arthur C. Clarke Award Sales Data (2014-2019).

31 See Appendix A.

32 Todd, p. 7.

33 See Appendix A.

Overall, sales saw an increase by both the shortlist and the win announcements across all prizes, thus highlighting the effects upon book sales and reading habits that these awards can have.³⁴ That is not to say that it is the awards alone that achieve this; media attention forces the announcements into more peoples' ears and bookshops often create displays of honour for both SL nominees and the final winners.³⁵ It is said that "most sales in a bookshop are made within the first 20 to 30 feet of the entrance".³⁶ If a prize display is near the front, it will attract attention and increase sales. It is difficult to separate advertising consequences versus the award-winning reputation of a book, especially when one leads to another. However, further study could involve delving more into the idea of high reputation versus high exposure.

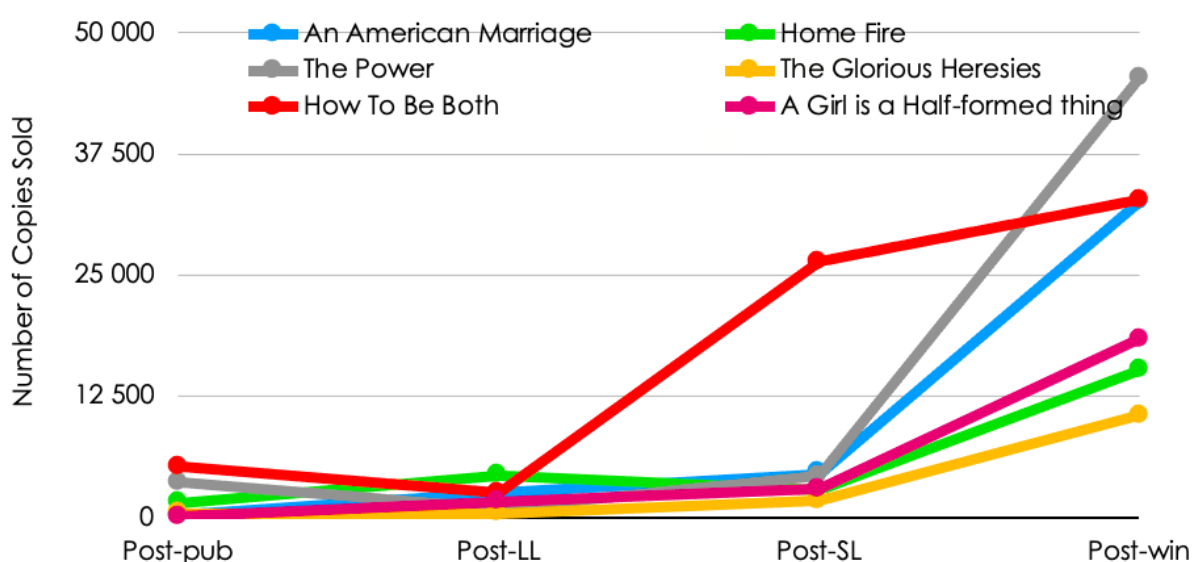


Figure 2 - Women's Prize for Fiction- Sales Figures.

Higher quality comes with many prizes such as raised expectations and invitations to judge; a search for the reasoning behind this great value occurs. The second part to hypothesis one was also confirmed: following a literary prize win, positive reviews decreased. Figure three demonstrates the reaction to literary prize winners via average star ratings following Booker win announcements; it caused the greatest increase in reviews on Goodreads out of the five prizes analysed, confirming statements describing it as an "attention generating mechanism".³⁷

An increase in notoriety due to an award win can be noted via the review data also, with Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* only holding 14 reviews in

³⁴ See Figure 2.

³⁵ Squires, p. 87.

³⁶ Clark, Giles and Angus Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, 5th edn (Oxon: Routledge, 2014) p. 233.

³⁷ Auguscik, p. 327.

the months following the publication. This figure leapt to 134 after her Booker win in 2019.³⁸ It must be acknowledged that the 2019 Booker Prize event was shadowed by controversy with two winners granted the first-place award; Cheele remarks, “the Booker Prize has become synonymous with controversy, sparking heated arguments not only between the judging panels but also between authors, readers and the media”.³⁹ Whether the dispute is wide-spread and covered by media attention or more controlled, it has the possibility to affect a reader’s opinion on the text in question, even subconsciously.⁴⁰

Stars Given by Reviewer

Book	Author	No. Reviews	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Av. *
<i>The Testaments</i> (19)	Margaret Atwood	579	69	107	124	122	157	3.33
<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i> (19)	Bernardine Evaristo	14	0	0	1	5	8	4.50
<i>Milkman</i> (18)	Anna Burns	13	0	1	4	2	6	4.08
<i>Lincoln in the Bardo</i> (17)	George Saunders	341	61	42	69	66	103	3.32
<i>The Sellout</i> (16)	Paul Beatty	92	9	3	18	30	32	3.79
<i>A Brief History of Seven Killings</i> (15)	Marlon James	78	14	11	5	23	25	3.44
<i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i> (14)	Richard Flanagan	76	5	12	6	22	31	3.82

Table 5 - The Booker Prize (2014-2019) Review Data Post-Publication.

³⁸ See Tables 6 and 7.

³⁹ Cheele, Ellie, ‘The Booker Prize: Scandal, Controversy and Marketing Tool’, *The Journal of Publishing Culture*, 3.1 (2013), 1-7. (p. 4) <<https://journalpublishingculture.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/6/8/4/16842954/cheele.pdf>> [Accessed 20 May 2020].

⁴⁰ See Appendix G.

Book	Author	No. Reviews	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Av. *
<i>The Testaments</i> (19)	Margaret Atwood	281	69	56	62	48	46	2.81
<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i> (19)	Bernardine Evaristo	134	25	19	26	30	34	3.22
<i>Milkman</i> (18)	Anna Burns	80	17	11	10	19	23	2.08
<i>Lincoln in the Bardo</i> (17)	George Saunders	94	29	24	14	15	12	2.54
<i>The Sellout</i> (16)	Paul Beatty	64	8	14	19	9	14	3.11
<i>A Brief History of Seven Killings</i> (15)	Marlon James	144	28	33	17	34	32	3.06
<i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i> (14)	Richard Flanagan	135	25	33	16	37	24	3.01

Table 6 - The Booker Prize (2014-2019) Review Data Post-Win.

Book	% Difference- Pub to Win (Weighted Average Star Rating)
<i>The Testaments</i> (19)	-15.62%
<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i> (19)	-28.44%
<i>Milkman</i> (18)	-49.02%
<i>Lincoln in the Bardo</i> (17)	-23.49%
<i>The Sellout</i> (16)	-17.94%
<i>A Brief History of Seven Killings</i> (15)	-11.05%
<i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i> (14)	-21.20%

Table 7 - The Booker Prize (2014-2019) Review Data: Percentage Difference in Star Rating (Weighted Average).

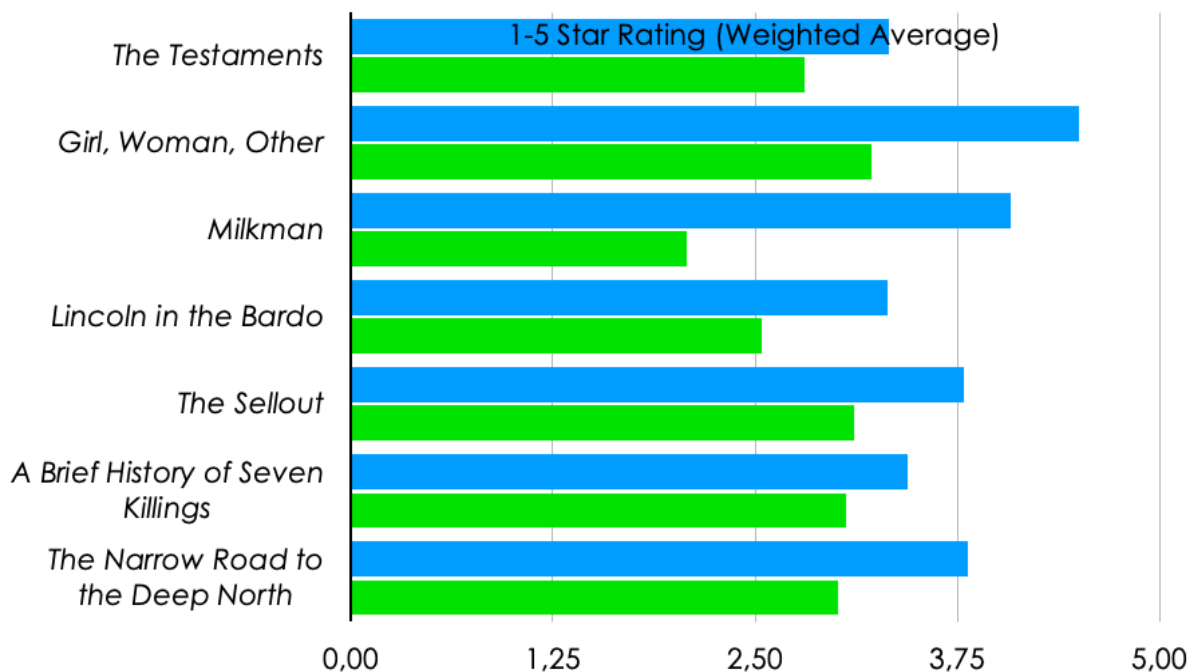


Figure 3 - The Booker Prize (2014-2019)—Review Data.

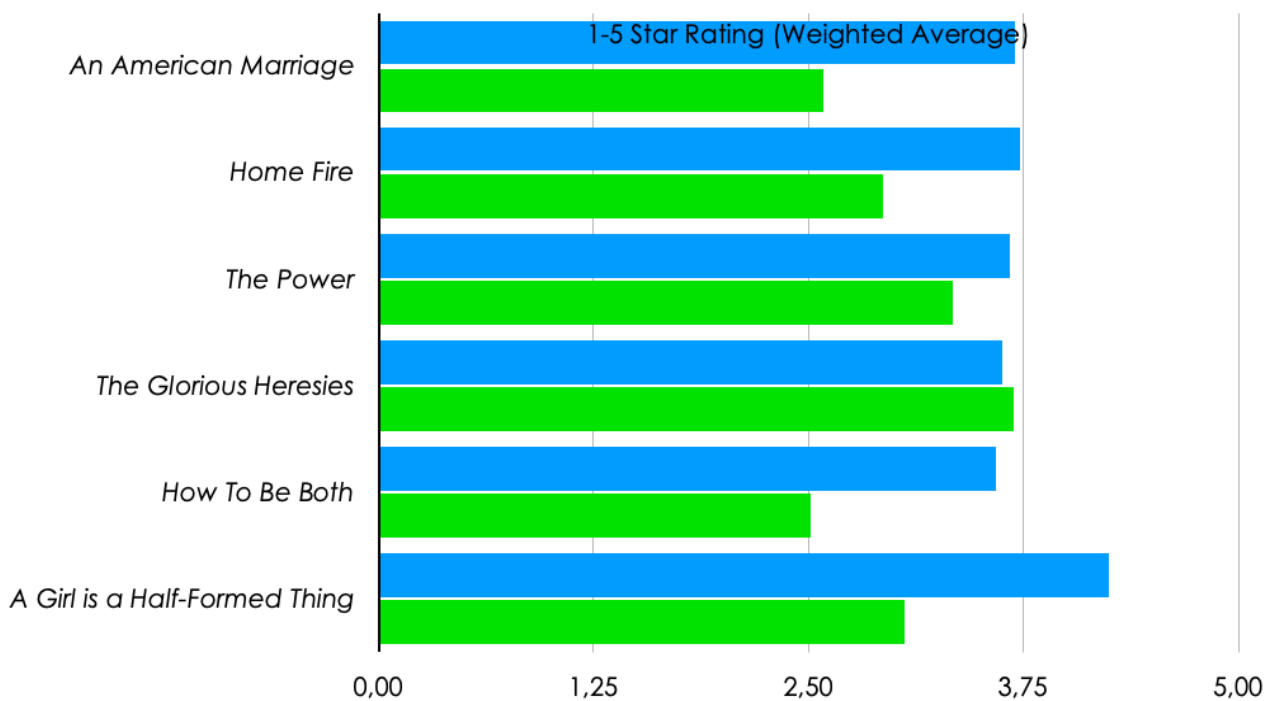


Figure 4 - The Women's Prize for Fiction (2014-2019)—Review Data.

The buying habits of one reader are not independent of the buying habits of another. There are 'mob motivations' behind certain sales with people following what is deemed 'popular' or 'the best', as judged by awards.⁴¹ Leibenstein outlines what he coins 'the bandwagon effect' when referring to consumers' demands whilst shopping for products.⁴² Demand is increased due to others buying the same product after its introduction because of its award win. This could help to explain why after a book wins an award an influx of readers who have never heard of the author or genre are drawn to the title. Beyond the genuine interest in the new 'best' book, there are those who are simply drawn to the popular and safe choice.⁴³

Long exposure of the award winner to the audience is key. When comparing the literary prizes, the awards with longlists (the Booker, the International Booker and the Women's Prize) caused larger increases in sales after the win announcement. Further research could determine whether this reflected the prestige and social reach of these three awards, or whether having a longlist positively affects sales figures versus not having one.

From the quantitative research data three primary conclusions can be drawn that adhere to hypothesis one: following a literary prize win, sales increase, and the number of negative reviews increase. The qualitative research involved a thematic analysis of Goodreads reviews, as a number of common points of discussion were relevant to explaining why reviews generally differed in opinion regarding a book post-award win.

Surprise at the Selection⁴⁴



Figure 5 - Reviewers expressing surprise at the selection for the respective literary awards (Goodreads, 2020).

41 H. Leibenstein, 'Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers' Demand', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 64.2 (1950), 183-207 (p. 184) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1882692.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search%2Fcontrol&refreqid=search%3A78015e9c6fa803adbb2d1cd37f6daf93> [accessed 3 August 2020].

42 Leibenstein, p. 190.

43 Beck; Akbari.

44 Goodreads (2020), <<https://www.goodreads.com>> [accessed 26 June 2020].

A common theme amongst the lower scored reviews was an exclamation of outrage at the winner of the literary award.⁴⁵ When readers express shock or confusion at an award win in their review, there is exhibited an instant connection between the novel and the prize.

Whilst reading the book or writing the review, the fact that the book was a prize winner affected the experience in some way; it was an important enough fact to make it into the review, explaining the star rating. The three reviews in Figure six take this a step further and all begin by stating that the book in question won a prize. They do not start with an interesting quote or an initial reaction, but instead choose to mention the award, which insinuates that it is the most poignant feature relating to the book. The review for *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie does not give an opinion on the award in any way, simply stating that it won before moving onto the opinion piece. The fact that the book in question is an award winner is understood whilst reading and reviewing these books, whether it is at the forefront of the mind or as a small aside.



Figure 6 - Reviews considering literary prize wins (Goodreads, 2020).

Would Never Have Read Before

Another repeating pattern involved variations of the sentence, 'I never would have read this book if not for the [blank] award'. As explained by multiple scholars, literary prizes act as "consumer guides", both for the followers of the prizes and the unaware readers in need of advice.⁴⁶ Book prizes point at a novel and declare it 'the best' above all others.

⁴⁵ See Figure 5.

⁴⁶ Todd, p. 71; Street, p. 837; Auguscik, p. 12.

Landline
by Rainbow Rowell (Goodreads Author)
Dec 19, 2014
★★★★★
Quite surprising that this was a Goodreads "Best Books of 2014." That's the only reason I got this book to read, so what a disappointment.

Home Fire
by Kamila Shamsie
Jun 10, 2018
★★★★★
I read Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie last month after she won the Women's Prize as I wanted to see what all of the buzz around the book was about. I didn't realise that this is actually Shamsie's 7th book as I hadn't heard of her before. I guess that's what these literary prizes are good for - giving recognition to books and authors that you might not have come across or chosen to read!

How to Be Both
by Ali Smith
Jan 31, 2015
★★★★★
This was my first Ali Smith and maybe my last. There were some wonderfully descriptive extracts and the love of art and colour and fascination with how to re-create things were pleasing, as was the relationship between George and her mother followed with the struggle to deal with her loss. It was outside my normal genres and while it had some touching moments, it required by far too much concentration. I want to read for pleasure and relaxation and 'How to be both' did not allow me that, instead leaving me - at the end - with unanswered questions for which I will probably have to re-read the book - which is not likely. Overall probably not worth the straying from what I normally read.

Dreams Before the Start of Time
by Anne Charnock (Goodreads Author)
May 07, 2018
★★★★★
I picked up this book after reading it had been shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and the synopsis made it sound like the kind of book I would be in to.

A Horse Walks into a Bar
by David Grossman, Jessica Cohen (Translator)
May 01, 2017
★★★★★
bookshelves: netgalley, contemporary, translated, read-on-kindle, 2016-release
I've never really been drawn to stand-up comedy, so it's unlikely this book would have appeared on my radar if not for its Man Booker International longlisting.

Girl, Woman, Other
by Bernardine Evaristo
Oct 05, 2019
★★★★★
4,5
I had never heard of Bernardine Evaristo before her Booker prize nomination

Middle England (Rotters' Club, #3)
by Jonathan Coe (Goodreads Author)
Jan 18, 2020
★★★★★
I read this book because of its nomination for the Costa Best Novel Award for 2020 (which it won incidentally)

Figure 7 - Reviews showing that the primary reasons for reading the above books were the various literary prizes that they won (*Goodreads*, 2020).

It is a reason to pick up the book and read it, despite perhaps never having heard of the author or having considered the genre before.

When audience members evaluating an object are attracted to it because of its status rather than its substantive features, mismatches between the focal object and the taste of the audience members are more likely to occur.⁴⁷

Reading something with perceived value placed upon it means that the reader now hopes to at the very least understand why the increase in value has been granted. The prize win is often the only thing drawing the reader towards the book, at least at first.

The review for *A Horse Walks Into A Bar* by David Grossman admits that the book never would have “appeared on [their] radar” if not for the International Booker Prize.⁴⁸

Introducing foreign novels and writers to new audiences is a positive consequence for the diversity of non-English authors in the UK. However, literary prizes exponentially widen the pool of readers in terms of reading habits and tastes, to the point where frequent ‘mismatches’ are occurring between the book and the new reader. Additionally, “the increase in audience size may also have a direct negative effect on evaluations for consumers who devalue popular items”.⁴⁹ ‘Mainstream’ items are often dismissed by individuals since the item is no longer exclusive to them alone.⁵⁰

Since the selected reviews are taken from the months following the shortlist and win announcements, inferences can be made that reviews mentioning ‘hype’ and ‘rave reviews’ are in relation to the attention bought about by literary prizes.

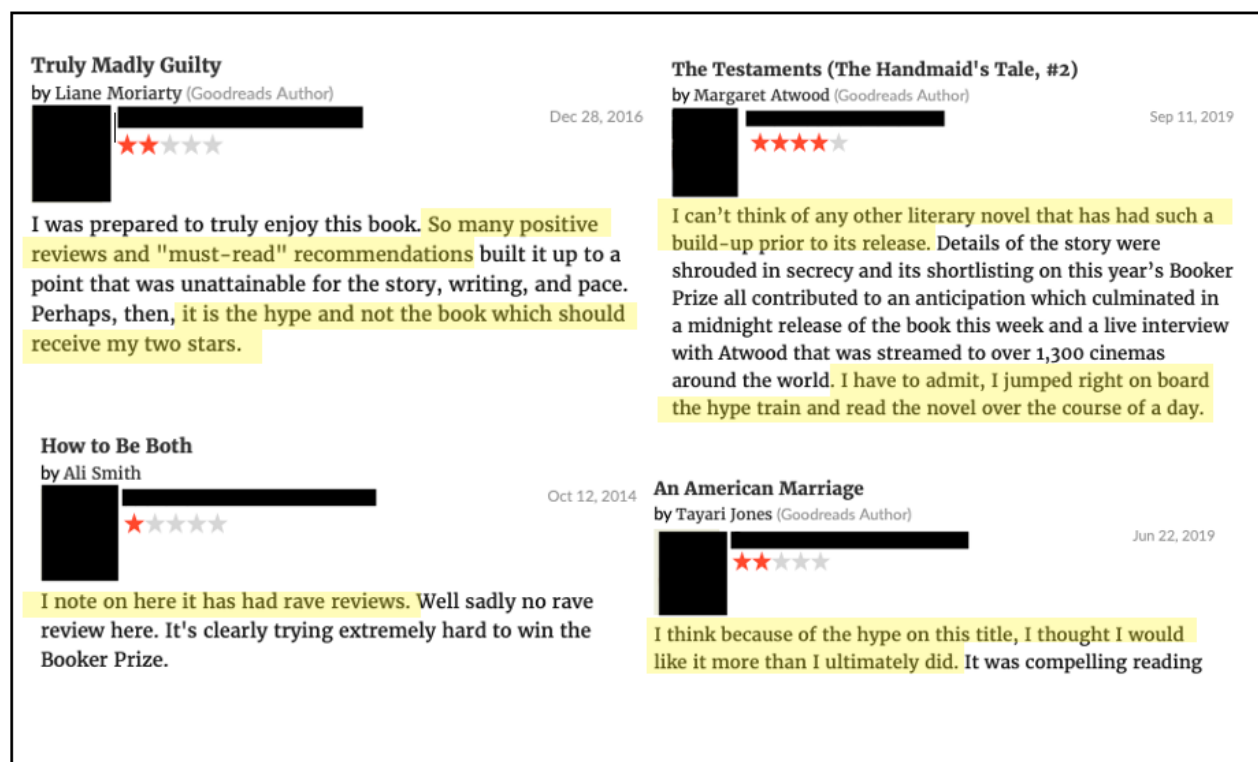


Figure 8 - Reviews written by readers taken in by ‘hype’ surrounding an award-winning book (Goodreads, 2020).

48 See Figure 7.

49 Kovács and Sharkey, p. 3.

50 Constance Grady, ‘How “Let People Enjoy Things” Became a Fight Against Criticism’, Vox, 16 May 2019. <<https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/5/16/18618425/let-people-enjoy-things-criticism>> [accessed 14 May 2020].

The review for *Truly Madly Guilty* by Liane Moriarty summarises the reviewer's feelings by stating that it was "the hype and not the book which should receive [their] two stars".⁵¹ The level of anticipation generated by these awards is difficult to attain. The review for *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood acknowledges the immense level of media attention that surrounded the novel prior to its release. Having Atwood as the author, being the sequel to a cult classic and being Booker nominated, all joined to form levels of anticipation that could never have been reached (see Fig. 9). Further research could determine the exact contribution the media makes to high expectations when compared to the prizes themselves.

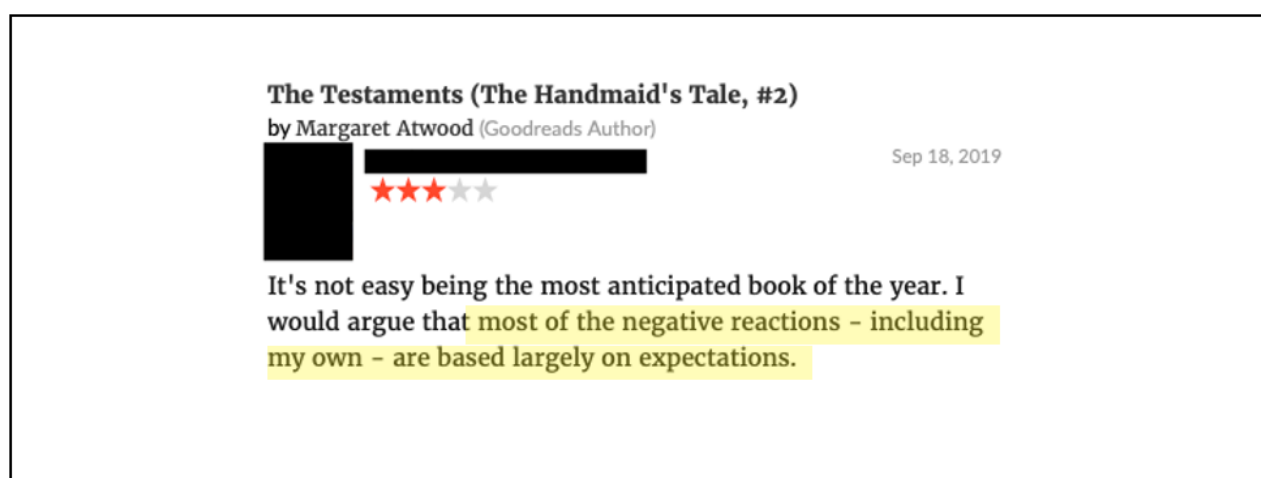


Figure 9 - A review for *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood. The reviewer explains where they believed a lot of negative reviews to come from (*Goodreads*, 2020).

High Expectations Equal Disappointment

The decision to buy a book is not a simple one: "a prospective buyer has to get acquainted with a particular title, secondly, he has to develop a preference for it, and finally, he has to make up his mind to buy it".⁵² The acquaintance with a title and the preference for it both form from hearing about the prize win, either via social media, word-of-mouth or by the 'win' sticker on the cover. The decision to buy has now been made due to a certain amount of value that has been attached to the book; this effectuates pressure for that book to maintain the value of being classified a 'winner' by the buyer.

⁵¹ See Figure 8.

⁵² Susanne Janssen and Hein Leemans, 'Differences in Consumer Behaviour Between Buyers of Literature', *Poetics*, 17.6 (1988), 563-575 (p. 564). <<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/0304422X-88900125?token=1A8D072E6F9C62E35C9CBF9BACCC53B6BDC278CAF6DD03AAEED7988B190D2B3D-FA7A7B32A1848A69EC2B276F2DA50D08>> [accessed 21 May 2020].

People were “underwhelmed”, they were “let down” and their expectations were “unmet”.⁵³ As is demonstrated with the review for *The Testaments*, disappointment provokes a strong response due to the fast flip from ‘excited’ to ‘let down’. If expectations are non-existent, dislike for a book is possible, but “crushing disappointment” is not.

Little Fires Everywhere
by Celeste Ng (Goodreads Author)
Dec 05, 2017
★★★★☆
Don't you just hate it when you go into a book with high expectations and they are not met? This book gets so many five star reviews and I just can't see why! It should be my kind of book and actually I liked it just fine, but there is no way I could rave about it!

The Power
by Naomi Alderman (Goodreads Author)
Jul 10, 2017
★★★★☆
[This review was originally posted on Books of Amber](#)
Well, this was a bit boring. I'm massively disappointed in *The Power* because I picked it up after Alderman won a tonne of awards, including the Bailey's prize, and I thought it was going to be a modern classic. I was expecting something epic.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North
by Richard Flanagan
Oct 28, 2014
★★★★☆
bookshelves: not-worthwhile
This Man Booker Prize winner was a disappointment.

The Testaments (The Handmaid's Tale, #2)
by Margaret Atwood (Goodreads Author)
Sep 20, 2019
★★★★☆
Maybe I'll write a more in depth review when I recover from my crushing disappointment.

Station Eleven
by Emily St. John Mandel (Goodreads Author)
Aug 15, 2015
★★★★☆
1 out of 5 from me.
When I finished reading this I felt angry because it was so bad. I had high expectations because it won the Arthur C. Clarke Award.

Girl, Woman, Other
by Bernardine Evaristo
Nov 22, 2019
★★★★☆
I'm disappointed that I could only give three stars to each of the Booker joint winners this year

Figure 10 - Reviews discussing disappointment in literary prize winners (Goodreads, 2020).

I Only Continued Because I Had To

These reviewers forced themselves to continue despite hating the experience. For example, reviewers said that they “persevered”, “persisted” and did not “bail” on the book early because of the various literary prizes.⁵⁴ The experience was clearly not enjoyable and reflected in the low star ratings given to the books in

⁵³ See Figure 10.

⁵⁴ See Figure 11.

question. The prize shows that the book has value and is therefore special, leaving people to attempt to understand why. As shown in Figure 11, despite disliking the award-winning books, reviewers continued to read in order to try and reaffirm the book's value and discover why it was valuable enough to win the award. Not finding the answer (due to personal taste), a low rating is given. Forcing an experience that is unenjoyable also contributed to a lower rating than was potentially possible if the person had DNF'd.⁵⁵

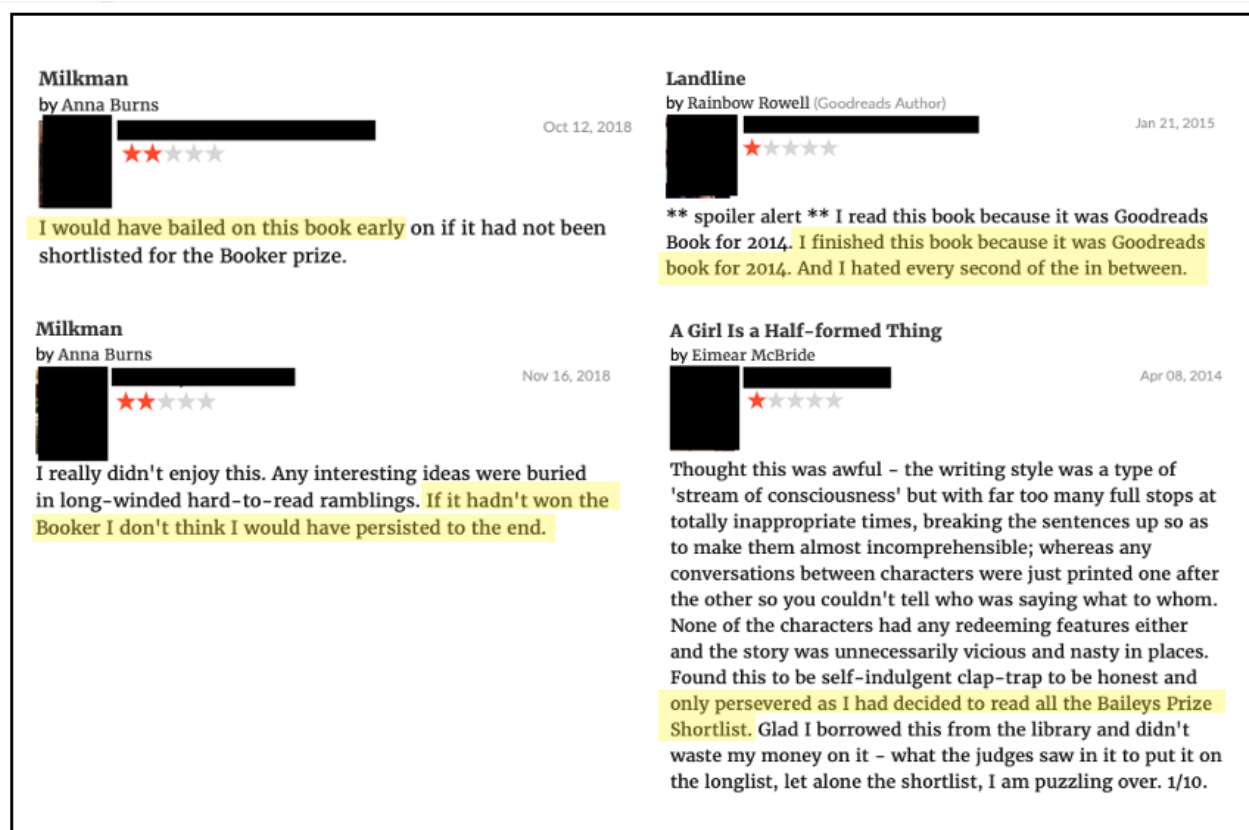


Figure 11 - Readers forcing themselves not to 'DNF' solely because the book won an award (Goodreads, 2020).

Was it Ever Worthy?

As previously discussed, a lot of expectational pressure builds when making the decision to buy and then read a critically acclaimed book; "for any work that succeeds in catching (and holding) the attention of reviewers and critics, this critical concern implies that a certain amount of quality is assigned to it".⁵⁶

55 'Did Not Finish'

56 Van Rees, p. 280.

Children of Time (Children of Time #1)
by Adrian Tchaikovsky (Goodreads Author)
Aug 25, 2016
★★★★★
bookshelves: favorites
Read 2 times. Last read April 10, 2019 to April 23, 2019.
A race for survival among the stars... Humanity's last survivors escaped earth's ruins to find a new home. But when they find it, can their desperation overcome its dangers? WHO WILL INHERIT THIS NEW EARTH? (Goodreads description of this book is quite dramatic!)
Well, this book was dramatically quite good! More than good – it was excellent. Children of Time won the 2016 Arthur C. Clarke Award, and it was well deserved!

The Vegetarian
by Han Kang
Jun 05, 2016
★★★★☆
I think I expected more from The Vegetarian. No, well, I think I expected something completely different, and I'm not sure I'm satisfied with what I got. As I said in my pre-review, I like to try out Pulitzer/Man Booker winners, for several reasons. It's mostly because I want to see what I might think of books deemed "worthy" by esteemed critics, and partly because I usually enjoy them.

Milkman
by Anna Burns
Oct 16, 2018
★★★★☆
This was rather slow. Only a couple of things had happened by 40% in. However middle sister's narrative voice was engaging, her character was lovely, and the plot was interesting so a worthy Booker Prize winner IMO.

Girl, Woman, Other
by Bernardine Evaristo
Oct 22, 2019
★★★★☆
It was definitely a good read but I am still unsure whether it was Booker-Worthy or not as it was just a series of short stories connected with a very thin thread. but yes, writing was very refreshing.

Figure 12 - Readers often decide whether a prize-winning book was worthy of the win (Goodreads, 2020).

In Figure 12, it is demonstrated that expectations for whether a book was or was not 'worthy' of the award win were very high, as shown by the four-star review for *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo. A high rating did not completely ensure that the book was 'worthy' of the Booker, with the reviewer stating that they were still "unsure" in this regard.

Readers are being informed of the value of a particular book before they pick it up. After being informed of the value second-hand, those same readers would then feel the need to make a judgement for themselves and this will not always have a positive outcome.

Literary prizes individually attract diverging opinions due to contrasting pre-existing expectations. The Booker garners the most attention due to having a higher level of journalistic capital ("visibility, celebrity, scandalousness") when compared to the other five prizes.⁵⁷ It arguably holds the highest level of prestige and although shown to have some of the largest overall percentage increases in sales post-win, this is not always a good thing. As explained by English, "the most prestigious awards draw the most intensely critical sniping".⁵⁸ This can be expounded with data concerning Goodreads reviews, as the Booker averaged the largest negative average difference (-23.82%) in star-ratings from post-publication to

57 English, 2008, p. 234.

58 English, 2008, p. 187.

post-win. The Women's Prize and the Arthur C. Clarke Award held the next highest percentage differences of -17.31% and -19.48% respectively, demonstrating the negative changes of opinion these prestigious prizes can cause. Whilst analysing the review data, common descriptors for both the Booker and the International Booker included: 'difficult', 'unreadable', 'nuanced', 'deep', 'innovative' and 'prestigious'. The words 'pretentious' and 'too clever' were also common brands, with reviews concerning the Costa Awards acknowledging that their winners were ultimately more 'popular' books.⁵⁹ Needless to say, "commercial considerations are put under taboo" and referring to a Costa winner as 'popular' was not always a positive review.⁶⁰

How to Be Both
by Ali Smith
Jun 05, 2015
★★★★★
How can anyone read this level of **pretentious rubbish!!** Why do I persist in reading things that say 'critical acclaim' and up for 'man Booker prize' and **still hope for something readable....**

How to Be Both
by Ali Smith
Dec 29, 2014
★★★★★
Meh. Reading this just confirms my suspicion that I have different taste to Booker judges. **They seem to value cleverness over warmth, and wit over (god-forbid) a good story.** I really liked *The Accidental*, but *How to Be Both* seemed overly contrived and complicated for its own good, not to mention gimmicky. Is Smith trying to compete with *The Luminaries*, perhaps? Disappointing.

Flights
by Olga Tokarczuk, Jennifer Croft (Goodreads Author) (Translator)
May 30, 2018
★★★★★
I'm not sure if this is a novel but it was a strange and enjoyable read. A great book to read while travelling as it is a contemplation of travel with a bit of very well written fiction thrown in. The Man Booker likes to award books that are **innovative** so I can see why this won.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North
by Richard Flanagan
Oct 16, 2014
★★★★★
Whatever your thoughts on the Booker prize and **the idea of literary books and prize winners being unreadable** put those ideas aside and read this book because it is brilliant.

Landline
by Rainbow Rowell (Goodreads Author)
Dec 29, 2014
★★★★★
bookshelves: 52-weeks-52-books, 2-stars, goodreads-2014
I can't believe this book won the prize for best fiction 2014 here at Goodreads!!! Really? I know the site is **more geared towards popular books** but for real, from all the fiction books released this year 'Landline' was the best? You got to be kidding me!!

The Testaments
by Margaret Atwood (Goodreads Author)
Sep 16, 2019
★★★★★
bookshelves: international, booker-long-2019
Huge anticipation surrounded the release of this Atwood sequel to *The Handmaids Tale*, a book rightly (imo) regarded as an enduring dystopian classic. The massively successful TV adaption, screened with the active participation of Margaret Atwood, has taken the story to a much wider audience than is possible in just a written form. Comparisons with the Harry Potter series, and the TV/book synergies are valid. Furthermore the image of the handmaid as a contemporary political presence, in public appearances makes the need for words secondary. The Gileadean nightmare is even more relevant now, in 2019, than it was in 1985 when *The Handmaids Tale* was published.
With expectations so high, it was always possible that the follow up would fail to satisfy.
I was disappointed, and the more so because the launch of *The Testaments* happened right in the middle of the 2019 Booker Prize competition. **This is the most famous, and most widely followed, literary prize in the world; and it is a 'literary' prize, regarded by many, as too highbrow for the casual reader.**

A Brief History of Seven Killings
by Marlon James
Nov 06, 2015
★★★★★
When I first heard about this book it didn't appeal to me, but then when it won the Man Booker I couldn't bear not to read it. **I don't have the intellect or vocabulary to critically review this,** or say anything constructive, so all I can say really is I simply didn't enjoy it. A hard read in places, I found it difficult to keep track of the many characters, even with the cast list at the front of the book to which I frequently had to refer. One positive, my knowledge of patois has improved but I don't think I'll be using any of these recently learnt words in polite company any time soon. I am full of admiration for the author's achievement, but for me reading this book just became a chore.

Figure 13 -
Examples of
opinions concerning
the Booker,
International Booker
and Goodreads
Choice Awards
(Goodreads, 2020).

⁵⁹ See Figure 13.

⁶⁰ Hugo Verdaasdonk, 'Social and Economic Factors in the Attribution of Literary Quality', *Poetics*, 12.4-5 (1983), 383-195 (p. 386). <<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/0304422X83900141?token=1D3D6E7C3B61B5921478379219106A6BEAF8A9DDF31271876B81CAF1DA5CC42BD188B9E78BFFB-91817641FD28BEDA9F6>> [accessed 20 May 2020].

The general consensus appeared to be that the more prestigious the award is perceived as, the more highbrow the winners are and therefore the cleverer the reader felt they needed to be in order to understand it.⁶¹

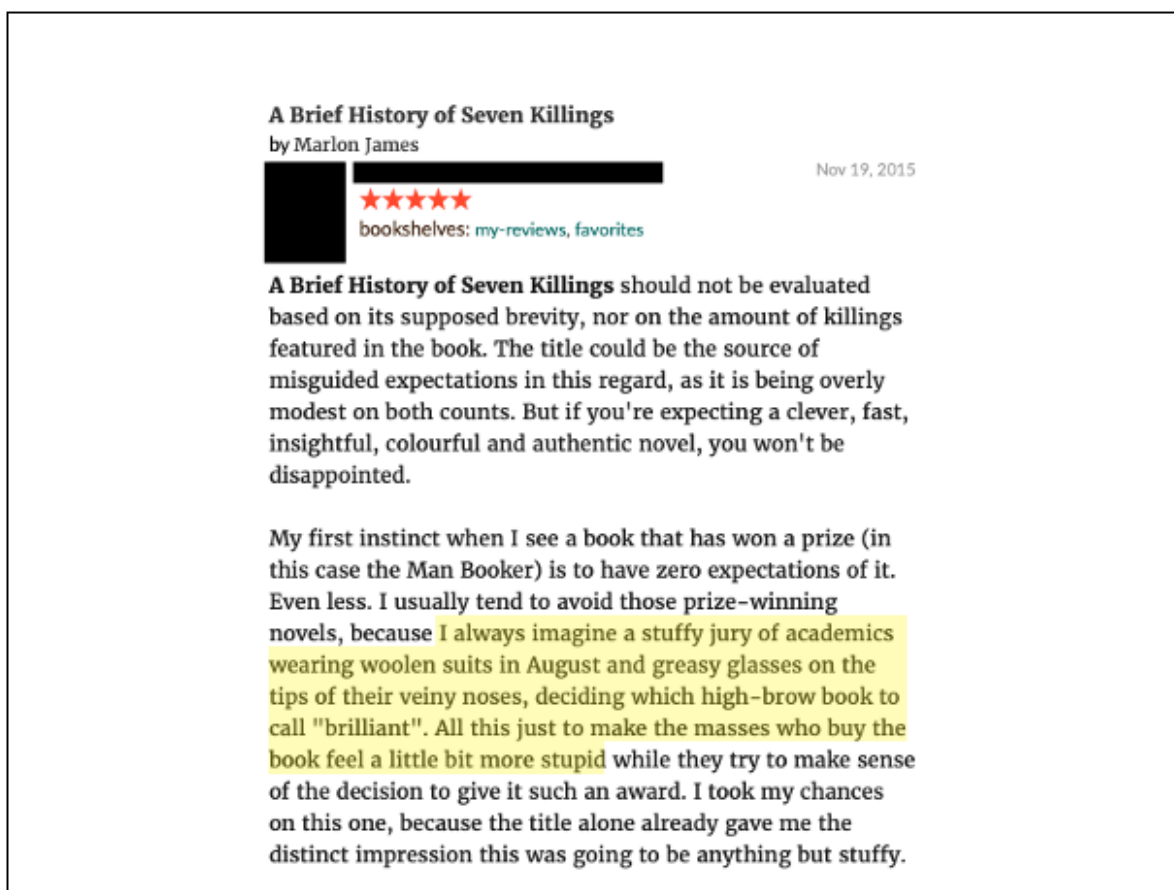


Figure 14 - An opinion of the process of prestigious literary prize selection (*Goodreads*, 2020).

The sense of superiority that the most prestigious potentially denote may be too much for the casual reader, souring the reading experience and adding to the 'critical sniping' that the prestigious receive.

Previous research into the phenomenon of negative literary awards has often culminated in the ambiguous conclusion that literary prizes both assign value to their winning books and help to negate it.⁶² For this study it can be concluded that: there are negative reactions drawn from the positivity of winning a literary prize. Although sales figures increase, as do the number of total reviews, the number of positive reviews decrease post-win. Of the prize winners, some would

⁶¹ See Figure 14.

⁶² Street; English; Kovács and Sharkey; Auguscik.

say that it is simply “our failure to come to terms with their ascendancy”.⁶³ It has been demonstrated that placing something on a pedestal has its downsides, due to the raised expectations and invitation for judgement regarding worth. Leibenstein explains the ‘snob effect’, which shows how desire for something can decrease once others begin to show an interest.⁶⁴ This coincides with explanations regarding negative positivity by Simcoe and Waguespack and Sauder and others, where a high level of perceived quality does not always work in the favour of the subject.⁶⁵ Since the post-purchase evaluation always follows the decision to purchase, the increased expectations of this ‘valued’ book are met with disappointment when personal taste is not adhered to and time has been wasted.⁶⁶ Due to new audiences being introduced to unfamiliar genres, disappointment and dislike is a common occurrence. Prizes that attracted fewer newcomers (due to being more niche or less advertised), appeared to lose fewer positive reviews post-win.

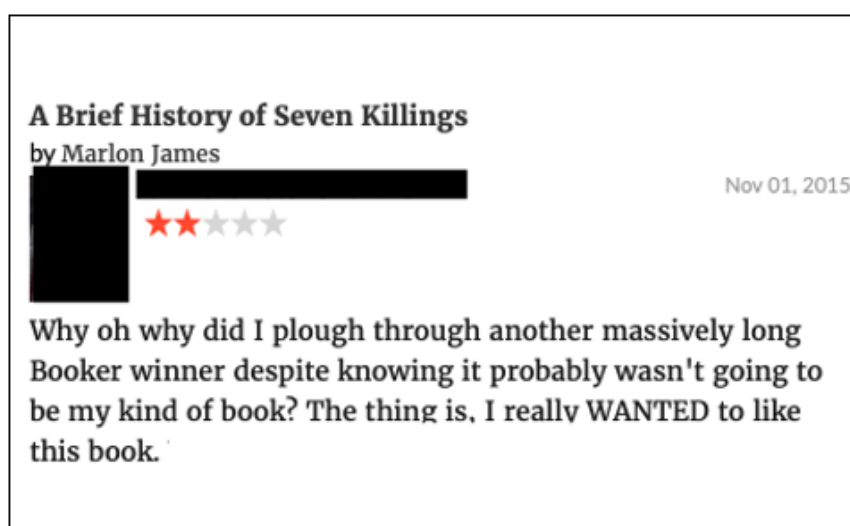


Figure 15 - A typical, common response when a prize-winning book is disliked (Goodreads, 2020).

Overall, it is clear that whilst literary prizes indirectly cause negative responses in some readers, they still offer credit and acclaim (via acknowledgement at least) for the authors nominated to win. The mixed reactions to literary prize winners occurred across all of the prizes studied, not only the most prestigious, the most media-driven or the most drawn-out, although arguably readers were more critical

63 English, 2008, p. 1.

64 Leibenstein, p. 190.

65 Simcoe and Waguespack; Sauder and others.

66 Hein Leemans and Mia Stokmans, 'A Descriptive Model of the Decision Making Process of Buyers of Books', *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 16.2 (1992), 25-50 (p. 26). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41810476.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search%2Fcontrol&refreqid=search%3A9d3cc98199b-d92a48b91e8409b62a807> [accessed 2 June 2020].

of the most prestigious. There were, however, definite differences in the ways in which readers reacted to the individual prizes, as predicted with hypothesis two. Increased book sales do not make a book valuable or determine its quality and neither do one-hundred positive reviews versus ten. These negative responses will always lead to the question of whether it is culturally sustainable to continue organising these awards if the outcomes are blurred. The primary consequence of a prize is to show physical recognition of something valuable, and of the talented person who created it. Should the focus be on whether this goal is achieved or not, or what the consequences of this recognition is? As stated by Bourdieu, literary prizes are a form of cultural capital; they are a “veil of magic, of collective make-believe”.⁶⁷ They do place perceived prestige upon their champions and that will always have consequences.

⁶⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Market of Symbolic Goods', *Poetics*, 14.1-2 (1985), 13-44. [accessed 2 June 2020].; English, 2008, p. 245.

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APPENDICES

A) Sales Figures- Complete Data Table

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WzoR3yqnC-0H-bQ1LvfmICBcZSWhtG_E/view

B) Sales Figures- Control Group 1

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SFyjZsDm3Hw9iPKau9_sjtNFstSd0er_/view?usp=sharing

C) Sales Figures- Control Group 2

https://drive.google.com/file/d/10-3xCPxRvPis_tFckqShh9BRp7vjqbt0/view?usp=sharing

D) Sales Figures- Control Group 3

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1miHP7wEdTUWto1ZgSqQgWe1iL6El6Gwb/view>

E) Review Data- Complete Data Table

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OR1BgRlz5hRkq1sNWTcz9BqtrllMjuf-/view?usp=sharing>

F) Goodreads Review Data- Percentage Differences in Star Rating (Post-publication to Post-win)

Literary Prize	Percentage Difference in Star Rating (Post-publication to Post-win)
Booker Prize	-23.82%
International Booker Prize	-12.44%
Costa Book Awards	-15.64%
Women's Prize for Fiction	-17.31%
Arthur C. Clarke Award	-19.48%
Goodreads Choice Awards	-15.79%

G) Controversies/Events in the Publishing World, as Seen through Goodreads Reviews

Lincoln in the Bardo
by George Saunders
Nov 12, 2017
★★★★★

When it comes to this book, my emotions aren't so much mixed as chopped and blended. Not just because of the debate about Yanks being eligible for the Booker (they shouldn't be). It's more personal.

The Testaments (The Handmaid's Tale, #2)
by Margaret Atwood (Goodreads Author)
Nov 25, 2019
★★★★★

A completely unnecessary sequel and (somewhat?) cynical cash-in on the successful TV series. This feels like deliberate fan service, but it's especially contrived and forced, adding very little to the fictional universe of *The Handmaid's Tale*. The world-building here is more literal and the exposition more overexplained than in the 1985 original. Learning more about how the theocratic and patriarchal political system of Gilead functioned actually subtracts from the first-person horror and brutality of Offred's found diaries, which left much more to the imagination. The prose and dialogue are both pedestrian, and the thriller plotting is perfunctory and unsuspenseful (I agree with *_but_*. While the two girls' voices are flat and interchangeable, and the characterization is psychologically crude, at least Aunt Lydia's chapters demonstrate some acute awareness of moral ambiguity and complicity. Just inessential, especially when the judges depriving the more deserving Bernardine Evaristo of her rightful share of the entire Booker Prize haul.

Lincoln in the Bardo
by George Saunders
Nov 15, 2017
★★★★★
bookshelves: [booker-prize-shortlist](#)

What ever happened to good old-fashioned storytelling? Reading this book was not a good experience for me. And why oh why did ManBooker open up it's prize to American authors so that books like this and last year's *The Sellout* take top honors, undeserved top honors in my opinion. Awards seem to be going to the *gimicky* books these days....