To celebrate Audiobook Month this June, try listening to an award winner. Just as there are prizes for “best” books, audiobooks are eligible for Audie Awards, which are given annually by the Audio Publishers Association in a variety of categories, with librarian audiobook lovers around the United States as judges. All of the audiobooks mentioned below are available through Norwalk Public Library’s digital services (Hoopla, Overdrive, etc.).

This year’s winner for Best Male Narrator was Robert Bathurst, reading Kingdom of the Blind, written by an NPL favorite, Louise Penny. The mystery is the fourteenth in a series featuring Canadian Chief Inspector Armand Gamache. The review journal Audiofile praises Bathurst’s distinctive character voices, which fit seamlessly into Penny’s “familiar warmth and humanity.” Runners-up in the category include Ann Patchett’s The Dutch House (narrated by Tom Hanks) and Colson Whitehead’s The Nickel Boys (narrated by JD Jackson).

If mysteries are your “thing,” from the Mystery category, you can download a finalist: The Lost Man by Jane Harper, narrated by Stephen Shanahan. It’s the story of two men seeking answers for the death of their brother, set in the Australian Outback.

Authors are not always the best narrators of their own work, but Business and Personal Development finalist Nine Lies about Work: A Freethinking Leader’s Guide to the Real World is both written and read by Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall. Buckingham is a motivational speaker and thus no stranger to that scary spot behind the microphone.

Readers of Christian fiction will appreciate this year’s winner in that category: Jolina Petersheim’s How the Light Gets In, narrated by Tavia Gilbert. The novel is set in a Mennonite community that offers comfort to a young widow; according to Library Journal, Gilbert’s “voice balances strength and vulnerability, making the written word more emotionally effective.”

The winner in the Romance category was Devil’s Daughter by Lisa Kleypas, narrated by Mary Jane Wells; the Lady falls for a scoundrel, and “Wells’s rich voice lends itself to the story.” (Audiofile). Finalists include The Bride Test by Helen Hoang, narrated by Emily Woo Zeller; The Friend Zone by Abby Jimenez, narrated by Teddy Hamilton and Erin Mallon; and Red, White & Royal Blue by Casey McQuiston, narrated by Ramon de Ocampo.

The Classics/Literary Fiction category honored Ta-Nehisi Coates’s expansive The Water Dancer, narrated by Joe Morton, who, says Audiofile, “embodies its characters completely, making the listening experience cinematic.” Finalists
included The Milkman by Anna Burns, narrated by Brid Brennan; Mythos, Greek myths retold by actor Stephen Fry; and The Night Tiger, set in colonial Malaysia, written and narrated by Yangsze Choo.

*American Moonshot* by Douglas Brinkley, narrated by Stephen Graybill, was this year’s winner in the History/Biography category. The flight to the moon was the culmination of years of experimentation and trial and error. Listen for mention of Norwalk’s native son Brien McMahon! Finalists in this category include *The First Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill George Washington* by Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch, narrated by Scott Brick—who is a great favorite among audiobook fans.

A finalist in the Nonfiction category (which in the Audies includes popular science and sociology) is Malcolm Gladwell’s latest, *Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know about the People We Don’t Know*. As with his previous books, which share a distinctive narrative “voice,” he reads his own work.

Teen listeners (and their adults) will enjoy this year’s Young Adult winner, the heartbreaking graphic memoir *Hey, Kiddo* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka, narrated by a full cast of 40+ performers. Hey, Kiddo was also a finalist in the Multi-Voiced Performance category. Finalists for YA included *Like a Love Story* by Abdi Nazemian, narrated by Lauren Ambrose, Vikas Adam, and Michael Crouch; *On the Come Up* by Angie Thomas, narrated by Bahni Turpin (who also narrated *The Hate U Give*); and *With the Fire on High*, written and narrated by Elizabeth Acevedo. (That last title also won in the Narration by the Author or Authors category.)

If your listeners are a bit younger, Norwalk’s own Jerry Craft was a finalist in the Middle Grades category with *New Kid*, which he narrates alongside an impressive cast. Among the finalists is *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise* by Dan Gemeinhart, narrated by Khristine Hvam.

The Audio Publishers Association has been giving out Audies for excellence in audiobook narration for a quarter of a century; the award lists, broken into convenient categories, are a great resource for both seasoned listeners, and those who want to hear why the format is gaining in popularity.

For more information on this year’s winners, go to:

www.audiopub.org/winners/2020-audies