

# [***Jayne Anne Phillips' novel 'Night Watch,' Eboni Booth’s drama 'Primary Trust' among Pulitzer winners***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BYY-49W1-JC5B-G2XB-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

NEW YORK — Stories of race, slavery and the Civil War, real and invented, were [*winners this year for the Pulitzer Prizes*](https://apnews.com/article/pulitzer-prizes-2024-awards-journalism-arts-reporting-6e07cdcf937d49158d452f2cc0dbc214).

Jayne Anne Phillips' “Night Watch,” a mother-daughter saga set in a West Virginia asylum right after the war, was cited for fiction. Jacqueline Jones received the history prize for “No Right to an Honest Living: The Struggles of Boston’s Black Workers in the Civil War Era" and Ilyon Woo’s “Master Slave Husband Wife: An Epic Journey from Slavery to Freedom" won in biography.

Phillips, a West Virginia native who often sets her books in her home state, sees “Night Watch” as the third of a trilogy of novels about war, following the Vietnam-era narrative “Machine Dreams” and the Korean War story “Lark & Termite,” which draws in part on a Pulitzer Prize-winning Associated Press investigation into the No Gun Ri massacre.

She began “Night Watch” eight years ago, and found the Civil War era increasingly, and uncomfortably timely.

“The Civil War still has such an enormous hold on this country,” she said. “I hope people can pick up a piece of fiction and put their ***politics*** aside and enter into feeling what it was like for people at that time.”

Jones, a longtime faculty member of the University of Texas at Austin who has been a Pulitzer finalist twice before, noted that so much remains to be written about the Civil War because until recently narratives focused on the battlefield. She began working on “No Right to an Honest Living” because she wondered how Black people were treated in Boston at a time when the city was a center of anti-slavery activism.

“It turns out, the radical abolitionists represented a very small minority in Boston and that the social division of labor was really discriminatory," she said.

The drama prize was awarded to Eboni Booth’s “Primary Trust,” about a Black bookstore worker's unexpected journey after he loses his longtime job, while a second biography prize was awarded Jonathan Eig for his Martin Luther King biography “King."

Booth, a New York City native who graduated from the University of Vermont and Juilliard’s playwriting program, started as an stage actor and has also written for Hulu’s “We Were the Lucky Ones” and HBO Max’s “Julia.”

Her play, about a lonely, full-grown man with an imaginary friend who drinks away his life at a tiki bar until he is aided by some residents of his small town outside Rochester, New York.

“I think I’m drawn to stories of loneliness and people who are trying to do battle, however quietly, with the feeling of being isolated,” Booth told the Roundabout Theatre Company, which produced “Primary Trust” off-Broadway last summer.

Nathan Thrall's “A Day in the Life of Abed Salama: Anatomy of a Jerusalem Tragedy,” in which a young boy's life is lost in the midst of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, won for general nonfiction. Cristina Rivera Garza’s investigation into the murder of her sister, “Liliana’s Invincible Summer,” won for memoir-autobiography, while Brandon Som’s “Tripas” received the poetry prize. Tyshawn Sorey's saxophone concerto “Adagio (For Wadada Leo Smith)" was the winner for music.

The Pulitzers honored the best in journalism from 2023 and arts categories focused on books, music and theater.

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AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy contributed from New York.

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