

Laura White—Young Alumni award

Under the pen name Elle Katharine White, 2013 alumna Laura White has written a successful fantasy trilogy published through Harper Voyager, an imprint of HarperCollins. Her first novel, *Heartstone*, is a fantasy retelling of *Pride and Prejudice*, reimagining Jane Austen's classic story in a world of dragons and monsters. *Publisher's Weekly* describes *Heartstone* as a "lively adventure full of action, wit, and romance."

Laura followed *Heartstone* with a successful sequel, *Dragonshadow*, and is set to release the third and final book in the series, *Flamebringer*, this November.

Vedika Khanna, Laura's editor at Harper Voyager, describes her as "a joy to work with, [and] a dream author," praising the nuance and depth she brings to the characters she writes and the world she has created. Vedika recalled editing *Flamebringer* with Laura, and navigating the unique challenge of telling a self-contained story while also wrapping up the trilogy in a way that would be satisfying to readers. "Laura was up to the task, and tackled it with a sharp eye and steady determination," Vedika says, adding that Laura's energy and hard work resulted in a fantastic final book that has been met with great early reviews.

Doug Gaerte, chair of Houghton's communication department, describes Laura as an outstanding student who brought to her classes a balance of "serious earnestness about issues she cared about, and [a] delightful sense of humor and quick, ready smile."

Laura's Houghton classmates also testified to her work ethic and her humility. They recounted how Laura quietly maintained a 4.0 average for all of her semesters at Houghton, something not even her close circle of friends knew until the honor was announced at graduation rehearsal.

The traits Laura cultivated at Houghton have continued to serve her in her career. She has put in untold hours refining her writing craft and shaping her manuscripts, all the while working full-time as a marketing manager for professional development company Colibri, where she has earned a reputation among her colleagues as an excellent communicator with an eye for the big picture.

According to Susan Bruxvoort Lipscomb, chair of the department of English and writing at Houghton, it is always a pleasure to have Laura return to campus and share her story with current students. "[Laura] is the perfect example of someone who achieved a dream that many of our writers have," Susan says, "[b]ut she's also the perfect example of the incredible amounts of hard work and persistence that achieving this dream [takes]."

For all that you have accomplished in the short time since graduation, and in expectation of all that is yet ahead for you, Laura, we honor you today with the 2019 Young Alumna Award.