

# Children's Literature in the Classroom

- ◆ Tapping the top
- ◆ Authentic marine science books for children



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## Tapping the top

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The glorious days of children's literature published in the 1980's appear to be back again. A myriad of new books with refreshing concepts and formats have received well-deserved awards and have been included on a number of notables lists. In this issue of *Dragon Lode*, the best-known prizes and selections from various lists are revealed. We also provide you with one website address that may surprise you with some valuable information.

On February 1, 1999, the winners of the Newbery and Caldecott awards were named at ALA's annual midwinter meeting. The Newbery went to Louis Sachar's *Holes*, published by Frances Foster Books/Farrar Straus and Giroux. The story is at once humorous and bittersweet, focusing on a young man who is wrongly accused of a crime. His punishment is oddly reminiscent of the Nazi labor camps in that he must dig a hole every day as he is incarcerated in a camp in the middle of nowhere. This combination of humor in the face of injustice and inhumanity is a popular one in film now, as well, as seen in the movie *Life is Beautiful*. Laughing in the face of evil may continue to be an important topic in adults' and children's media if these works of art have any influence.

There was only one Newbery Honor award announced this year. It is Richard Peck's *A Long Way from Chicago*, published by Dial Books for Young Readers. It is of interest to note here that both authors, Sachar and Peck, have been involved in children's literature for years and are both well-established authors.

The Caldecott Medal was given to Mary Azarian's *Snowflake Bentley*, published by

Houghton Mifflin. The illustrations are woodcuts, which seems an unusual way to portray something as delicate as a snowflake. And yet, the images are perfect representations of the beauty and sentiment expressed in the text about a young boy's love of snow.

Four illustrators were distinguished with Caldecott Honor awards. They are Brian Pinkney for *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra*, with text written by Andrea Pinkney and published by Hyperion Books for Children; David Shannon for *No David!* published by Blue Sky Press; Uri Shulevitz for *Snow*, published by Farrar Straus and Giroux; and Peter Sis for *Tibet Through the Red Box*, published by Frances Foster Books/Farrar Straus Giroux.

The men seem to have taken all of the awards this year. Kudos to all of them!

Angela Johnson of Ohio was presented with the Coretta Scott King Author Award for her book titled *Heaven*, published by Simon & Schuster. The illustrator award went to Michele Wood for *I see the rhythm*. Both of these books reflect the current trends in multicultural books and in books that combine art forms to create a prism of perspectives for readers.

Anne McCaffrey, another classic author, has won the 1999 Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing children's literature. McCaffrey has written numerous popular science fiction books that represent the best of the genre.

The Mildred L. Batchelder Award for international children's books was conferred on Dial Books for Young Readers for an incredibly sensitive book titled *Thanks to My Mother*. This book was first published in Hebrew and was written by Schoschana Rabinovici about her childhood in Nazi Germany. The book has been translated into German and English, the English edition edited by Cindy Kane and translated by James Skofield.

The May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture will be a thrill next year because the award has been presented to Hazel Rochman, assistant editor for *Booklist*. Ms. Rochman has done much important work, not only in publishing excellent children's literature but also in her work for peace and understanding through literature.

The Children's Literature Association's Phoenix Award for 1999 was given to

E. L. Konigsburg for *Throwing Shadows*. Jane Yolen, another accomplished author of children's books, received the 1998 Mythopoeic Society's award for her trilogy titled *Young Merlin*.

The notables lists that were announced for 1998 and thus far in 1999 are full of delights and refreshing new viewpoints. The Association for Library Services to Children has listed books that deal with magical realism (*My Life with the Wave* translated by Catherine Cowan, published by Lothrop Lee and Shepard and based on a story by Octavio Paz), the interplay of words and music (*Mysterious Thelonus* by Chris Raschka, published by Orchard Books, and based on the color wheel and compositions by Thelonus Monk), new science fiction from Lloyd Alexander (*The Iron Ring*, published by Dutton), the poetry of basketball in Richard Burleigh's *Hoops* (published by Harcourt Brace/Silver Whistle and illustrated by Stephen T. Johnson), and folktales *Mr. Semolina-Semolinus; A Greek Folktale* retold by Anthony L. Manna and Christodoula Mitakidou, illustrated by Giselle Potter and published by Atheneum).

The Publishers Weekly 1998 Notables List includes much variety also. Such well-known authors and illustrators as Leo and Diane Dillon, Jon Scieszka, Lane Smith, William Steig and Uri Shulevitz are represented on this list. Picture books, fiction and nonfiction books are listed by PW, as they are on the ALSC Notables List.

Finally, the Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, 1999 list, suggests a rich pool of literature for biography fans. Included in the biography section this year are Annie Oakley, Arthur Ashe, Isadora Duncan, King Arthur, Joan of Arc and Leonardo Da Vinci. These historical figures and others are well represented in such titles as: *Annie Oakley Legendary Sharpshooter* by Jean Flynn, published by Enslow; *Arthur Ashe* from the A&E Biography Series written by Caroline Lazo and published by Lerner; *The Dalai Lama* by Demi, published by Holt; *Isadora Dances* by Rachel Isadora, published by Viking; *King Arthur* retold by Rosalind Kerven and published by DK Publishing; *Joan of Arc* by Diane Stanley and published by Morrow; *Women of Hope: African Americans Who Made a Difference* by Joyce Hansen and published by Scholastic; and

*Leonardo Da Vinci for Kids: His Life and Ideas; 21 Activities* by Janis Herbert and published by Chicago Review. Gripping stories of real contemporary conflicts can be found in such books as *If I Forget, You Remember* by Carol Lynch Williams, published by Bantam, with an Alzheimer's theme; *Iqbal Masih and the Crusaders Against Child Slavery* by Susan Kuklin, published by Holt, about the child labor activist and his murder; *Lost in the War* by Nancy Antle, published by Dial, about the

Vietnam conflict; and *Outspoken: Role Models from the Lesbian and Gay Community* by Michael Thomas Ford, boldly published by William Morrow; about the lives of gay teenagers. Many more titles concerning the environment, traditional literature, geography, and the history and culture of the Americas can be found on the full list which is available on the internet at <<http://www.ncss.org/resources/notable/1999.html>>.

## Call for Nominations

The IRA Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group is seeking nominations for a vice-president and three new members of the Board of Directors for a three-year term. The vice president shall serve as an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors and coordinator of external programs. He[She] becomes president-elect the following year of his[her] vice presidency and assumes the presidency upon expiration of the incumbent president's term. The Board of Directors shall attend two meetings annually and exercise general supervision over property and affairs of the group.

We invite you to nominate IRA members who are especially interested in children's literature and literacy. Please include your candidate's biographical statements and reflections on these areas, which will be included with the ballot.

***Deadline for nominations***  
**FEBRUARY 8, 2000**

***Mail to:***

**Helen R. Abadiano, Chair  
IRA CL/R SIG Nomination Committee  
Department of Reading and Language Arts  
1615 Stanley Street, New Britain, CT 06050**

***or***

**E-mail <[abadiano@ccsu.edu](mailto:abadiano@ccsu.edu)>**