

Title of Session: K-12 Language Arts - Caldecott Awards

Moderator: Karen Lemmons

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Room: Language Arts Group

BJB2: I guess we should start, Karen...I know you've got some cool stuff to share

KarenL blushing, I don't know. I think Sue is very aware of the prestigious book awards.

KarenL: but I will go for it anyway.

KarenL: I'm in Seattle, the site of the American Library Association Midwinter Meetings.

KarenL: It is usually at this conference that all the committee work of the library association is done.

KarenL: One of the biggest highlights of the midwinter meeting is the announcement of the book awards, what I call the Academy Award of books/media.

KarenL: It is usually done on Monday morning, 8:00-9:00 am, and publishers are literally on pins and needles in anticipation of the announcements. It is really a big event.

KarenL: Well, last year I had the honor and privilege of serving on the Caldecott Committee. This committee selects books for their distinguished illustrations.

BJB2: so you don't even get a hint until Monday?

KarenL: Not a clue. The committee that selects the books is in closed sessions. We know where they meet. However, those meetings are closed to the public.

KarenL: The committee breaks for lunch, dinner, and rest. However, we are pretty much sequestered until we reach a decision.

BJB2: I'm sure the suspense is really thick!

KarenL: We start on Friday and by Saturday evening or early Sunday morning, we need to make a decision.

KarenL: When I served on the committee, there were 15 of us. We went the book that received the most votes.

BJB2: do you know what books have been nominated this year?

BJB2: o O (if you're not on the committee, do you know what books have been nominated?)

KarenL: no. Publishers send the books to the committee members. And I am guessing that any selections were made electronically, so that the ones that made the cut will be discussed in the meetings.

KarenL: not at all. We can only guess based on the books that were published.

BJB2: do you think that is the most effective method?

KarenL: Actually, it did work for us. We received a ton of books regularly. I mean TONS of books. We had a manual that discussed in length "distinguished" illustrations. We used that as a guide to select the distinguished ones.

KarenL: When we submitted our choices electronically, we selected 2-3 books that we believed met the distinguished criteria. As we got closer to our meeting date, we really narrowed down our choices.

KarenL: But, I tell you that was tough, because with 15 people, you have the possibility of a minimum of 45 different books.

BJB2: yikes!

KarenL: Luckily, some of us liked some of the same books, so that narrowed down our choices.

KarenL: then there were some books, i didn't find distinguished at all. But, folks defended their choices well, and I was convinced on one.

BJB2: amazing that there are sooooo many books published every year

BJB2: all that money invested in the publishing process

KarenL: BJ, you have no idea! I have bookcarts and bookcarts full of books.

KarenL: Yes, I'm telling every week, and sometimes twice in a week, I was receiving a shipment of books.

KarenL: And so was every committee member. That means publishers were sending out at least 15 complimentary copies of books, now that was just for our committee.

CarolN joined the room.

BJB2: Hi, Carol!

CarolN: Hello all, late but thought I would catch the group.

BJB2 . o O (working late again, Carol?)

KarenL: We have Newbery, nonfiction, Spanish, and a host of other book committees that publishers are sending complimentary copies. It is quite expensive for them.

BJB2: Karen has been sharing the Caldecott awards process

BJB2: I'm sure they feel that it's an investment, Karen

KarenL: But when they win, it pays off for them.

BJB2 nods

KarenL: Then there is the ALA seal that is put on the book, and publishers are somewhat assured that the book will be around for awhile.

KarenL: When I was on the committee, The Hello-Goodbye Window won the Caldecott Award.

KarenL: I had the honor and privilege of meeting Chris Raschka. He is a very interesting fellow. I loved his book Yo! Yes! and had the opportunity to tell him.

BJB2: did he sign a copy for you?

KarenL: We also had some honor books. Rosa by Bryan Collier was one of them.

KarenL: Yes, he did. He also sent me a bookmark he knitted. Was that awesome!!!!

KarenL: Then for my one brief moment of fame, I was invited to all these luncheons and dinners.

BJB2 smiles. Talented fellow

BJB2: how do you get selected to be on the committee?

KarenL: Yes he is and to think he was thinking about being a doctor!

BJB2 . o O (all those books would make me feel like I had died and gone to heaven)

KarenL: Well now this is the interesting part. Some people are actually elected, by the membership to serve on the committee. Then there are some spots for appointments.

KarenL: I was appointed. I was shocked. I almost thought it was a joke--a scam.

BJB2: how cool, Karen!

KarenL: I almost deleted the email because I said who is sending me an email about an appointment to Caldecott?

BJB2 smiles

KarenL: So I read the email and sure enough, I was appointed. I kept it a secret for a while. Then I told some people and they were happy for me. I told them I thought the email was a scam.

SherylM: It must have been a thrilling moment though

BJB2: I agree, Sheryl!

KarenL: One of the requirements is that you have to be a member of ALA, plus a member of ALSC (Association of Library Services to Children) in order to serve on the committee.

KarenL: It was. I was really, really, very humbled and honored by the experience. As a result, I look at illustrations in picture books so differently now.

BJB2: and how many members do those organizations have?

KarenL: Well, ALA has about 60,000 plus members. ALSC probably has about 10,000.

BJB2: wow!

KarenL: However, not everyone votes. It truly becomes a name recognition voting process.

SherylM: The ALA is like the APA I think they have a huge number of divisions

BJB2: discussing how you evaluate illustrations might make a good topic for one of your LA sessions, Karen

KarenL: The more people you know and know you, the better your chances to get elected.

KarenL: Okay, that sounds like a good idea!

SherylM: Do they make the guidelines or rubrics available online or just to the committee.

KarenL: How am I doing? Am I boring you guys yet?

BJB2: I'm not bored! I love picture books

SherylM: No, I love to talk about the Caldecott books. I am also interested in this process

BJB2: . o O (and use them often in my classroom)

CarolN: what I've caught so far is interesting.

KarenL: I did want to show you the list of books. There is an annotated list but that is a members-only accessible.

KarenL: Cool!!!!

SherylM: Is this the entire list you started with?

KarenL: The committee has a manual that is only available to the committee when they are elected or appointed.

KarenL: It is very detailed in terms of the process, in terms of what is distinguished.

KarenL: It covers all different forms of illustrations, including photographs and digital illustrations.

KarenL: It is recommended that we read some books that are considered "experts" on picture books so that we have a working knowledge of the vocabulary and quality art.

KarenL: There was one book that I loved. I can't think of the name of it. It was a concept book, that showed fruits and vegetables in an unusual way.

KarenL: It was so "cute.", but not distinguished.

KarenL: I mean the faces of the orange was a little mean, and could be considered frightening to some children, but other fruits were beautifully created.

KarenL: Rosa, I loved. Bryan Collier is a very talented illustrator. He uses collage very well and the front cover had this kind of halo effect around Rosa, suggesting she is an icon.

KarenL: The Hello-Goodbye Window took some convincing to me. But I saw how well Chris illustrated with the text and how the lovely bright colors just really emphasized the cheerful tone of the book. Here is this girl who is visiting her grandparents, and they

KarenL: look out this window that is so inviting and then when it is time to go, is closed, but only temporary.

SherylM: You know, when I saw the illustrations that were selected in 2006, the style was somewhat reminiscent of some books of the '60's and '70's, except for Rosa. It reminded me more of Verna Aardema

BJB2: http://www.amazon.com/Rosa-Nikki-Giovanni/dp/0805071067/sr=1-1/qid=1169167575/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/104-5774743-0111129?ie=UTF8&s=books

BJB2 . o O (to view the cover of Rosa)

KarenL: True, I personally loved the variety of illustrations we selected.

KarenL: thanks bj!

KarenL: Show Way was also under consideration. However, the illustrations were not always true to the text.

SherylM: I liked the "Song of the Water Boatman", but I always like that style.

KarenL: Jacqueline Woodson is an awesome writer and the text in Show Way was great.

KarenL: I liked Song of the Water boatman! When I received that book, I immediately used it in a lesson.

KarenL: talking about life in ponds.

KarenL: The illustrations were perfect!

SherylM: Show Way has a beautiful cover. I haven't seen it yet

KarenL: and I don't even like bugs! The poetry was great, not contrived, if you know what I mean.

SherylM:

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbnInquiry.asp?z=y&EAN=9780399237492&itm=1>

KarenL: the illustrator really thought out the illustrations. And a few illustrations were large and seemed like it was off the page, but it worked.

SherylM: That would make sense, because you get the sense of fabric or a quilt and it often covers.

KarenL: has everyone seen the hello-goodbye window book?

BJB2: no, I'm not familiar with it

KarenL: yes, and the quilting was really nice. However, it wasn't always consistent throughout the book and for some committee folks that was a problem.

KarenL: let's see if we can pull it up for you.

SherylM: It has those water color pictures reminiscent of the Madeline books

SherylM:

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbnInquiry.asp?z=y&EAN=9780786809141&itm=1>

SherylM: You can click on the pic and get an inside view

KarenL: Sheryl, thank you!!!

BJB2: Show Way reminds me of Faith Ringgold

SherylM: No prob, I love Barnes and Noble. I get members discount online and you can get a 20% teachers discount in stores

KarenL: yes, I love Tar Beach. . .

SherylM: You know older children like Tar Beach...I have used it with middle schoolers

KarenL: Yes, they do and they do have a nice children's section.

BJB2 nods. Me too

BJB2 . o O (time is almost up, Karen.)

KarenL: I am so glad to hear that because some middle/high school folks believe that these students don't like picture books.

KarenL: They are so wrong.

SherylM: So true

BJB2: The next K-12 Language Arts discussion is February 15

KarenL: Oh my goodness!!!! Did you want to see the list of books?

SherylM: If we can

KarenL: I'll just post it in the files.

CarolN: a note. My high school students love picture books.

SherylM: Cool

KarenL: Have you shown them Harlem, and Black Cat by Myers?

BJB2 . o O (the Feb topic is Black History)

KarenL: Good poetry and beautiful illustrations. Then there is beautiful blackbird by Ashley Bryan.

KarenL: But I'm digressing. Let's see if I can get the links for you.

KarenL: <http://www.ala.org>

SherylM: so can we bring our favorite book ideas for Black History month?

BJB2: Thanks, Karen...stimulating and inspirational as always!

KarenL: yes, that would be great!! I would love to see your choices!!!

SherylM: Thanks

KarenL: I love sharing!!!

KarenL: Thank you guys. . .I hope this was informative. . .

CarolN: Thanks for the info.

SherylM: Very. Love to find out about the Caldecott process from someone who got to do it

KarenL: you are welcome. Thanks for coming! See you next month!