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Irresistible Children's Literature

The Benefits of Integrating Newbery Award Books into the Curriculum

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Abstract

Reading is the most fundamental skill taught in school. Many schools rely heavily on textbooks and basal readers to teach reading skills. Research, however, shows that exposing students to outside literature is more likely to promote a love of reading that will last for a lifetime. Books that have won the Newbery Medal, which is given to “the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” (Association, 2004, p. 3), can and should be integrated into the elementary and middle school curriculum. Given since 1922, Newbery Award books provide a variety of themes and thought-provoking topics appropriate for classroom use. Teachers assume the role of exposing students to quality literature to promote not only academic growth but also the desire to become a lifelong reader. This thesis may be used as a tool for teachers to select appropriate books for a variety of classroom uses. The paper categorizes the Newbery Medal books, showing how they can be integrated into social studies, science, fine arts, and multicultural education, and also provides examples of how these books may be used as bibliotherapy.

## Irresistible Children's Literature

### The Benefits of Integrating Newbery Award Books into the Curriculum

Students' exposure to quality children's literature may be the single most important factor contributing to their development as lifelong readers, and thereby lifelong learners. Until the last two decades, new teachers were not specifically trained in integrating outside literature into their classrooms. Textbooks and basal readers formed the basis for most English and reading instruction. Current research shows that students benefit more from reading a variety of quality trade books than simply reading from the prepackaged materials that many schools still use. Reading expert Dorothy Leal (1998) reports that over the past two decades, trends have begun to move in the right direction – teachers are realizing the benefits of exposing students to outside literature; however, many educators themselves have not been exposed to the vast array of quality literature. Not only does this type of literature develop students' technical reading skills, but it is also more likely to keep the students' interest, encourage critical thinking and imagination, and teach them about realistic life experiences. Often, educators find familiarizing themselves with the vast amount of material available a daunting task. One of the best places to find quality children's literature is the list of books that have received the Newbery Award. Given since 1922, the Newbery Medal and Honor books have been awarded to the books that have made the “most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” (Association, 2004, p. 3) published during the previous year. Not only do Newbery books provide superb and interesting plots to engage the reader, but they also teach life lessons. Teachers in today's elementary and middle school classrooms need to be familiar with Newbery Award books for the purpose of integrating them into the curriculum, which encourages students' interest in reading, exposes them to situations outside their personal life, and validates

their own experiences. This thesis categorizes the Newbery Medal books into separate topics for the purpose of integration across the curriculum.

### Decline in Reading Enthusiasm

A teacher's primary objective should be to foster a love for reading. Too many educators, however, focus on transmitting isolated skills during reading instruction. While the functional skills need to be addressed, Tompkins (2004) notes that a disproportionate amount of time is spent on grammar rules, definitions, and usage. Enthusiasm for reading decreases as the number of rote exercises increases. Huck (2002), who started the first graduate program in children's literature, reports that most children start reading less after the age of thirteen. After this age, they begin to view reading in a negative light; they see reading not as a pleasurable activity but as a chore they are forced to do in school. With exposure to quality materials, this trend could be reversed exponentially.

Instead of using quality trade books, many classrooms rely heavily on basal readers, textbooks, and literature anthologies. Basal readers are available for kindergarten through eighth grade. Companies claim that basals can form a "complete reading program" (Tompkins, 2004, p. 410). Beginning teachers often appreciate having all the reading instruction compacted into one volume (Tompkins, p. 28). These books offer a very structured approach. They include short stories and sections from chapter books. The guide provides instructional ideas, lesson plans, and ways to discover an individual student's reading level (p. 41). Vocabulary lessons, companion workbooks, and exercises are included in the book as well (p. 21).

While there is a place for basals, particularly in the younger grades when phonics and reading instruction needs to be more structured, there are many drawbacks to using basal reading programs. Basals usually provide just an excerpt from a chapter book; students miss out on the

full context of the story (Tompkins, 2004, p. 329). Students understand, remember, and relate better to trade books. Basals focus heavily on grammar rules, usage, and rote memorization rather than actual communication. Correct reading and writing are stressed, while language experimentation is lost. Additionally, teachers find it more difficult to integrate reading across the curriculum or develop a meaningful theme if they use the basal reading program. If basals are used in reading instruction, they should not be used exclusively. Other sources should be integrated into the curriculum (Tompkins, 1991).

### Teaching Reading through Literature

Quality trade books can supplement, or even replace, the basal reading program. Current research shows innumerable benefits of teaching reading through the use of literature rather than by simply focusing on the isolated skills stressed in textbooks and basals. Children's literature expert, Charlotte Huck (2002), defines children's literature as "the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language" (p. 4). Not only can students learn and practice the technicalities of reading, they will also become absorbed in the process of reading. Quality literature provides the opportunity for enjoyment, imagination, escape, and language development. Through the engaging plots of stories, children will be exposed to situations they would not have otherwise been able to experience. They can observe human behavior, live vicariously through characters, understand themselves and other people better, as well as see the universality of the human experience (Huck). Through reading, they can gain a deeper understanding of the world. Newbery Award-winning author, Lloyd Alexander, said that "each book, in effect, is a different life...it enriches our personalities, ourselves, helps us grow internally, externally in the way we deal with other human beings" (cited in Kerby, 1999). Situations that occur in stories can be applicable to real life.

Fictional conflicts mirror reality. Referencing his Newbery medal book, *The High King*, Alexander says that although the story is fantasy, “we recognize ourselves in it...the decisions are just as hard” (cited in Kerby, 1999). Marion Dane Bauer reiterates this idea: “Stories help us make sense of our world. They teach us what is possible. They let us know that others before us have struggled as we do” (cited in Watt, 1994, p. xi). Books with engaging plots help people to make better sense of the world they live in (Tomlinson, 2002).

Literature encourages thinking and discussion. It can be used to show differing opinions, but can also teach respect for others’ points of view. Children can see that certain issues are not always clear (Tomlinson, 2002). For example, the teacher can lead a classroom discussion on the causes of war. Characters on opposite sides can both be admirable or evil. In the 1975 Newbery Honor book, *My Brother Sam is Dead*, the main character struggles within his own family during the Revolutionary War. His father is a loyalist, while his older brother joins the rebel army against the British. Books that introduce conflict or dynamic social issues are breeding grounds for good classroom discussion.

Quality literature is not only beneficial for enjoyment, but students will glean useful information from the text as well. Huck (2002) explains that “the context of literature educates while it entertains. Fiction includes a great deal of information about the real world, present and past...All areas of the curriculum may be enriched through literature...literature has the power to educate both the heart and the mind” (p. 20). Reading should not be an isolated skill that is taught during a designated time slot, but rather an integration of many subjects.

Research shows that vocabulary is best developed through reading. Contrary to many classroom practices, the best method for learning new words is not in memorizing lists of words and looking them up in the dictionary. Rather, students learn best through “incidental word

learning” (Tompkins, 2004, p. 219). Children will learn the definitions of words that they read through the context of books. After third grade, the best predictor of a student’s vocabulary range is directly related to the volume of books they read. The most effective way a teacher can help students achieve an increased vocabulary is by making them want to become avid readers (Tompkins, p. 219).

### Criteria for Quality Literature

What exactly is quality literature? How can it be measured? Huck (2002) defines it as literature that appeals to the reader on both intellectual as well as emotional levels (p. 4). Teachers should evaluate the plot, setting, theme, characterization, conflict, resolution, and style. Are the characters believable? Does the reader care what happens to them? Is the dialogue natural? Is the setting described vividly enough so that she feels as if she were actually there? Has the book stood the test of time? (Tomlinson, 2002). Huck says that second-rate literature makes the reader say, “That’s just the way I always felt” (p. 4). First-rate literature, however, will cause the reader to say, “Until now, I never knew how I felt. Thanks to this experience, I shall never feel the same way again” (p. 4). Quality literature should cause deep and critical thinking. Teachers should expose their students to books that they might not otherwise pick up and read on their own. Through class discussions and projects, the teacher will guide students so they will understand the elements of the story. While the reading level should challenge the student, the experience should still be pleasurable (Outz, 2003, p. 77). The final component in children’s literature is hope. Even if a story has a sad ending, there should never be the feeling of despair. Hope must always exist (Huck).

### Reasons to Use Newbery Award Books

All of the elements of quality children's literature are espoused in the books that have received the Newbery Award. The Newbery is awarded annually to the "most distinguished contribution to children's literature." Each Newbery is "marked by eminence and distinction, significant achievement, high quality, conspicuous excellence ... [they are each] individually distinct" (Association, 2004, p. 3). What better place for an educator to begin looking for quality literature than the books that have won this prestigious and coveted award? Over the past eight and a half decades, a large variety of books have won the Newbery. Almost any student can find a topic that appeals to him/her (Leal, 1998). Children typically enjoy reading books with humor, suspense, action, adventure, animals, and biographies. Later elementary students, between the ages of ten and twelve, enjoy mystery, the supernatural, and a sense of justice (Tomlinson, 2002). The Newbery Award winners represent all of these characteristics. Most of the Medal winners fit into the genre of realistic fiction. Informational, historical fiction, fantasy, biography, poetry, folk tales, and fables have also received the Medal (Aaron, 1993).

The primary reason educators should use Newbery Award books in the classroom is to promote a love of reading. The main character in *Maniac Magee*, the 1991 winner, is always portrayed with his nose buried in a book. Author Jerry Spinelli regrets the fact that he rarely read as a child (Kerby, 1999). Teachers carry the responsibility to expose children to literature that they will want to read. They should consider summarizing many different books to spark interest (Huck, 2002). E.L. Konigsburg, the author of Newbery medal winners *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Franweiler* and *The View from Saturday*, shares her view: "Some readers will get the deeper, richer meaning, but when you write for children, you have to know that there are always going to be kids who are going to be intrigued with the story alone. I owe them a good story" (cited in Hendershot, 1998, p. 677). Books that receive the Newbery Award

often have that “deeper, richer meaning” (Hendershot, p. 677). This is one reason why these books lend themselves particularly well for classroom use, because they are both enjoyable and enriching (Tomlinson, 2002).

### History of the Newbery Award

The Newbery Award was named for John Newbery, who published the first children’s book written specifically for its entertainment value. He is known as the “father of children’s literature” (Huck, 2002, p. 18). Born July 9, 1713 near London, Newbery worked in the printing business his whole life. Before his time, children’s literature was practically nonexistent. Children were treated as small adults that needed to be taught lessons and religious morals – entertainment had no value. If they wanted to be entertained, their only options were books like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver’s Travels*, which were originally written for adults (Roberts, 2004).

In 1744, John Newbery took a professional risk by publishing *A Little Pretty Pocketbook*. This book was written specifically for children and contained entertainment value. The Latin phrase “*Delectando monemus*” was written on the first page, which means “instruction with delight” (Roberts, 2004, p. 30). Each page contained a short poem or lesson to correspond with every letter of the alphabet. The book was complete with pictures and came packaged with a toy – a ball for boys and a pincushion for girls. The wildly popular book encouraged Newbery to continue publishing books for children. Between 1750 and 1767, he published about twenty-five more children’s books. Since no author is listed on the books, many speculate that John Newbery himself may have written them. In 1751, Newbery also published the first children’s magazine, entitled *The Lilliputian Magazine*. John Newbery’s contributions paved the way for the vast world of children’s literature available today (Roberts).

Nearly two centuries later, Frederic G. Melcher, the chairman of the American Booksellers' Association, proposed honoring quality children's literature with an award named for John Newbery. Librarians supported the idea. The award is presented "to encourage original creative work in the field of books for children." The Newbery "emphasize[s] to the public that contributions to the literature for children deserve similar recognition to poetry, plays, or novels." Additionally, its goal is "to give those librarians, who make it their life work to serve children's reading interests, an opportunity to encourage good writing in this field" (Roberts, 2004, p. 10). In 1922, the first Newbery Medal was awarded to *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik Willem van Loon and has been given annually since then.

#### Process for Choosing Newbery

The Newbery Award winner is selected by librarians in the Children's Division of the American Library Association. Given to the "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children," the book that is chosen is based on quality, rather than popularity or its "didactic" (or teaching) (Association, 2004, p. 4) usefulness. The panel members judge the text of the book, not the illustrations. Fiction, nonfiction, and poetry books are all eligible for consideration (p. 3). The book must have been first published in America, and the author must currently be a citizen or resident of the United States (Tomlinson, 2002). The judges consider plot development, theme, accuracy, clarity, organization, uniqueness, character development, setting, and appropriateness for children up to fourteen years old (Licciardo-Musso, 1999, p. 4).

The Newbery panel consists of fifteen members. Eight are elected by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), which is a division of the American Library Association. The remaining seven are nominated by the president of the ALSC. Each member of the panel must read a multitude of books throughout the year. Every children's book that has any chance

of winning the Newbery is evaluated. The panel comes together to discuss the merits of the books and to nominate contenders. After much debate and deliberation, the panel votes. Each individual picks three books – their first choice gets four points, second choice gets three, and third choice gets two (Rowe, 2004, p. 8). The points are tallied, and the ALSC announces the winner in January (Aaron, 1993, p. 1).

The Newbery Medal winner receives a gold seal on the cover. Jerry Spinelli, the author of the 1991 winner *Maniac Magee*, explains how winning the Newbery changes the authors' lives – “they sell more books; they give more speeches; they get thousands of fan letters; they get less sleep” (cited in Kerby, 1999). In addition to the medal, the panel chooses up to six honor books each year. Although this paper focuses primarily on the Newbery Medal books, the silver-sealed runners-up contain significant value as well (Roberts, 2004). For example, *Charlotte's Web* – one of the most popular children's books of all time – was an honor book in 1953. Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* series received the honor five times but never the medal (Huck, 2002). Educators would benefit from familiarizing themselves with both the medal and honor books.

### Role of the Teacher

Teachers carry the heavy responsibility to promote a love of reading to their students. There is a significant difference between teaching the techniques of reading versus making kids *want* to read. Children should have the desire to pick up a book in their free time (Tompkins, 1993). In order to promote this love of reading, teachers have the role to select, present, and recommend particular books. Teachers must personally like the book they are recommending; teachers' true feelings will be very obvious to their students, even if they try to disguise them (Tompkins, 2004). In order to recommend quality books, they must familiarize themselves with

a wide variety of books. This seems to be a daunting task; teachers feel as if they are asked to become “literature experts overnight” (Richards, 1994). Familiarity with the award books is a great place to start. Research, however, shows that knowledge about quality children’s literature is severely lacking. A study that tested seventy-two teachers’ knowledge of common Newbery titles showed that only one-third of teachers were able to recognize basic descriptions of the more common award books (Outz, 2003). Familiarity with award-winning titles will give teachers a pool of high quality literature to both use in the classroom and to recommend to their students.

### Common Themes in Newbery Winners

Newbery Award books contain a variety of themes. Before 1960, many of the books explored the issues surrounding “growing up, overcoming fear, and searching for acceptance.” In the more recent decades, many of the winners have focused on social issues, minority and multicultural themes, and the difficulty of children being forced to deal with adult-sized problems (Aaron, 1993, p. 4).

### *Bibliotherapy*

These varied themes represented in the Newbery Award books lend them to bibliotherapy, which is using books to help the reader deal with particular issues (Outz, 2003). For example, the heavy themes of death and coping with loss are addressed in *Bridge to Terebithia*, the 1978 winner; *Missing May*, the 1993 winner; *Kira-Kira*, the 2005 winner; and *The Higher Power of Lucky*, the winner in 2007. The topic of divorce is the theme of the 1984 and 1997 Newbery books, *Dear Mr. Henshaw* and *The View from Saturday*. *Summer of the Swans* is about a girl who takes care of her handicapped brother. These are just a few examples of difficult situations children face in real life. Literal survival stories, such as *Island of the Blue*

*Dolphins* and *Julie of the Wolves*, show children that they too can survive the most difficult of circumstances. Reading about characters dealing with tough issues provides a non-threatening way for them to cope.

### *Broadening Students' Horizons*

Other Newbery Award winners focus on topics that expose children to situations that are outside of their own personal experience. Lois Lowry, in reference to her book *The Giver*, says that the theme of her 1994 Newbery Medal winner is that the world is bigger than one's own little bubble of existence. The book is about Jonas, who lives in a "Big Brother-like" society where no one deviates from the prescribed actions of behavior. Lowry calls it an "only us, only now world where we are all the same and feel safe" (cited in Kerby, 1999). The end of the book exposes the danger of not allowing freedom of expression in this "walled world" (Kerby). Children should learn at an early age the value of humanity and the benefits of learning about people different from themselves.

## Integrating Newbery Books into the Curriculum

### *Multicultural Integration*

The value of multicultural awareness is being emphasized in today's classrooms. James Banks (2001) defines a multicultural education as "an education for life in a free and democratic society. It helps students transcend their cultural boundaries and acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to engage in public discourse with people who differ from themselves" (p. 1). Research shows that students prefer to read about different cultures through literature rather than learning the dry facts from a textbook (Brown, 1998, p. 54). Literature can create empathy when children are able to relate to the characters that may have a different

background than their own. Multicultural education refers to not just race but also gender, handicaps, social class, and geographical area (Biazzo, 2006).

The primary reasons for fear and hatred toward people with different backgrounds is due to a lack of understanding. Quality multicultural literature can show that all people deal with similar emotions, conflicts, and struggles. The purpose of this literature is to show that “similarities outweigh our differences” and that all are a part of the “human family” (Brown, 1998, p. 13). Using appropriate literature in the curriculum can help combat negative stereotypes that alienate particular groups of people.

Children who are a part of a minority group enjoy seeing themselves in the books they read. Literature can serve to validate their experiences as well as to teach them more about their own heritage. After family, books are the second most significant way that children learn about their own culture (Gillespie, 1994). In Brown’s *United in Diversity*, a teacher writes about a particular student who had been placed in the Remedial Reading Program. The student, who was originally from Puerto Rico, had struggled with reading throughout elementary school. Because of his low reading level, he had always been assigned to read out of workbooks. This new teacher, however, decided to give him a book about a Puerto Rican family. The child devoured the book and developed a love for reading. Multicultural literature can provide a feeling of significance to children who may be struggling as they try to fit in (Brown, 1998).

It is also important for the teacher to expose children to literature that focuses on people of cultures different from their own. For example, if the classroom consists mostly of African-American students, the books should certainly not all be about black people. Students, no matter their background, should learn about other cultures as well. Books can celebrate people’s differences. In Lois Lowry’s 1994 Newbery Medal book, *The Giver*, the characters are unable to

see color. Because it emphasizes the diversity in people, color makes them fearful. The main character, Jonas, however, can see his friend Fiona's red hair. He loves the rich shade and wants everyone else to see its beauty (Brown, 1998, p. xii). Exposing students to different cultures through literature is like opening their eyes to a new world of beauty and texture.

The Newbery Medal books provide many options for multicultural literature. Gillespie researched the award-winning books from 1922 through 1994 to evaluate which ones can be used for multicultural education purposes. Twenty-six percent of the medal books have black characters, 19% have Native-Americans, 18% have Europeans, 10% contain Asians, and another 10% have Hispanics. Gillespie (1994) provides a breakdown of the ethnicities and cultures represented in the Newbery books for each decade. In the 1920s, the medal books had both Asian and Polish main characters. *Shen of the Sea*, the Newbery Medal winner in 1926, contains sixteen short stories about Chinese culture, such as how chopsticks, tea, and printing were invented. The 1928 winner, *Gay Neck, the Story of a Pigeon*, takes place in India and describes the practice of training pigeons to deliver messages in their beaks to generals during war. In 1929, *The Trumpeter of Krakow*, which is about a struggling Polish family after the Tarter invasion in 1462, won the award. Black, Hispanic, and Native-Americans filled minor character roles during this decade.

In the 1930s, both Native Americans and Bulgarians are featured as main characters for the first time. The 1932 winner, *Waterless Mountain*, provides rich details of the Navajo culture through the eyes of the main character, Little Singer. *Dobry*, which won the medal in 1935, tells the story of a Bulgarian lad who dreams of becoming an artist. The book provides many details about the Bulgarian way of life. Another book featuring Chinese main characters won the Newbery in 1933. *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* is about a thirteen-year-old boy who serves as

apprentice to a coppersmith; aspects of Chinese culture and history are described. The first Italian minor characters are introduced as well, in the 1937 winner *Roller Skates*. Native Americans, Asians, and blacks also have minor roles during this decade (Gillespie, 1994).

In the 1940s, boys of Polynesian, Moroccan, and Dutch backgrounds are featured as main characters. *Call it Courage*, which won the Newbery in 1941, is about a Polynesian boy named Mafatu who must overcome his cowardice. The next year, *The Matchlock Gun* won the Medal, which is the story of a Dutch boy who saves his family during the French and Indian War. *King of the Wind*, the winner in 1949, is about a mute Moroccan boy who would give his life for his horse, the Godolphin Arabian (Gillespie, 1994).

Newbery Award books in the 1950s contained the first black and Hispanic main characters. *Amos Fortune: Free Man* is the true story about an African boy kidnapped from his country and sold as a slave in America who later gains his freedom. The first Hispanic main character is portrayed in the 1954 winner, *...and Now Miguel*, which is about a boy living in New Mexico who wants to prove his maturity to his father. The winner in 1953, *Secret of the Andes*, shows the culture of the Inca Indians and their conquest by the Spanish. *The Wheel on the School*, which won in 1955, takes place in a small Dutch fishing village. *Rifles for Watie* won the Newbery in 1958; it takes place during the Civil War but also provides many details about the Cherokee Indian tribe (Gillespie, 1994).

The 1960s brings the first Middle Eastern main character and the first person of “mixed” origins. *The Bronze Bow*, the winner in 1962, is about an Israeli boy who must overcome his bitterness toward the Romans who killed his father. The 1966 winner, *I, Juan de Pareja*, is the story of a boy who has a black mother and a Spanish father. Other books from this decade that contain multicultural elements include the 1961 and 1965 Newbery Medal winners. *Island of the*

*Blue Dolphins* is the survival story of a girl of the Arawuk Indian tribe who is left behind on an island. *Shadow of a Bull* is about the sport of Spanish bullfighting (Gillespie, 1994).

The tone of the Newbery Award winners begins to change after the 1960s. Social concerns are addressed more often in children's literature beginning in the 1970s. Three of the winners in this decade, for example, are centered on the social issues and prejudices African-Americans faced. *Souder*, the winner in 1970, is about a boy in a black sharecropping family whose father is imprisoned for stealing food to feed his starving family. In 1974, the *Slave Dancer* won the Newbery Award; it is the story of a white boy who must play his instrument on a slave ship to make the kidnapped Africans dance to keep their muscles from atrophy. The 1977 winner, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, details the mistreatment of African-Americans during the 1930s. *M.C. Higgins, the Great*, which won in 1975, shows details of the African-American culture. Another great multicultural novel from this decade is the 1973 winner. *Julie of the Wolves* is the story of an Eskimo girl who learns to survive in the snowy Alaskan wilderness by joining a pack of wolves. This book provides rich details about the Eskimo traditions and way of life (Gillespie, 1994, p. 45-46). This decade also provides the first winner about a character with a mental handicap. The 1971 winner, *Summer of the Swans*, chronicles the terrifying day when fourteen-year-old Sara's younger brother Charlie, who has suffered brain damage in a childhood illness, wanders off and disappears (Gillespie, 1994).

The Newbery Medal winners in the 1980s do not provide notable choices for multicultural purposes. Two of the winners had African-American characters with minor roles. In the 1980 winner, *A Gathering of Days*, the main character records in her journal that her father and uncle argued about slavery issues. In *Dacey's Song*, the winner in 1983, Dacey is criticized by one of her white friends when she befriends a black girl at school (Gillespie, 1994).

A wonderful multicultural choice from the 1990s is *Number the Stars*. This is a story, set during World War II, of a Danish family that risks their lives to help their Jewish friends escape to safety in Sweden. The 1991 winner, *Maniac Magee*, is about a white orphan boy who lives for a period with a black family. The story details the humorous events that take place in a neighborhood with an imaginary line separating the whites from the blacks; the main character becomes friends with people from both sides of the neighborhood (Gillespie, 1994). *The View from Saturday*, which won in 1997, is the story of four sixth-graders – each with a unique personality and background – who come together to form a championship Academic Bowl Team. Mrs. Olinski, the fun-loving teacher who handpicks these different students, suffers from a physical handicap.

Finally, the Newbery Medal books from 2000 to the present also offer choices in multicultural literature. The winner in 2000, *Bud, Not Buddy*, is about an African-American orphan who is on a quest to find the man he believes to be his father. *A Single Shard*, the winner in 2002, is a beautiful story set in Korea about a boy who learns the pottery trade. The 2005 winner, *Kira-Kira*, is about a Japanese-American family who must deal with prejudice, terrible working conditions in a chicken factory, and the illness of the oldest daughter Lynn.

The Newbery winners offer a wide-range of books that are appropriate to use for multicultural education. They offer variety through their coverage of many topics. It is important, however, for the teacher to read each book carefully before assigning it for classroom use. Are the portrayals of particular groups of people accurate? Are they stereotypical? It is a good idea to use more than just one book if the class is learning about a particular ethnic group; this can provide a richer and more complete picture as well as decrease the risk of stereotyping or generalizing. For example, several of the older Newbery Medal books portray Native-

Americans in a negative light, portraying them as savages, such as in *Hitty: Her First Hundred Years* and *Daniel Boone* (which is no longer in print). Children's literature published in more recent decades is usually considered more appropriate for use as a multicultural education tool; however, classics should certainly not be overlooked (Gillespie, 1994).

Quality children's literature can be successfully integrated into other areas of the curriculum. Reading does not need to be a skill taught in isolation. Charlotte Huck (2002) questions the need to present language arts as a separate subject. She suggests that literature should be presented within the context of history or science class, for example. Literature can bring together history, science, math, music, and art (Watt, 1994, p. xii). Information presented in quality trade books can lead to discussions in a multitude of other subjects. Students will glean, and better retain, information when presented within the context of literature.

#### *Social Studies Integration*

*History.* Social Studies can be greatly enriched with the incorporation of literature in addition to the use of standard textbooks. Because of standard teaching methods, studies show that students are often bored in history class as they are forced to read dull textbooks and memorize lists of dates and events. By merging literature into the social studies curriculum, students can learn the information in a way that is fun. By reading about historical events within the context of an engaging story, children will realize that history is not just a list of facts and dates but the stories of real people and the events that shaped their lives. Stories allow students to see how history affects people on a personal level (Tomlinson, 2002).

Dozens of books that have received the Newbery Medal fall into the category of historical fiction. They take readers into the past so they can experience the events that occurred during a particular time period. Several of the Newbery Medalists, including the 2008 winner

*Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!*, the 2003 winner *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*, the 1996 winner *The Midwife's Apprentice*, and the 1950 winner *The Door in the Wall* can be used in conjunction with a historical unit on the Middle Ages. The 2001, 2000 and 1998 winners take place during the Great Depression. *A Year Down Yonder* shows how the Depression affects Mary Alice and her parents' economic situation; she is sent to stay with her grandmother in the country. *Bud, Not Buddy*, which also occurs during the Depression, is about a young black boy who is on the quest to find a family after the death of his mother. *Out of the Dust* takes place during the 1930s, showing the struggles of an Oklahoma family through the Dust Bowl. An historical study of several Asian countries can be enriched with the 2002, 1933, 1931, and 1926 Newbery winners. *A Single Shard*, which takes place in Korea during the twelfth-century, is about a boy who learns the art of creating beautiful pottery. *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* is about a boy and his mother who must survive when they move to a new city in China. *Shen of the Sea*, also set in China, is a collection of short stories, fables, and folktales that provide rich insight into Chinese history and culture. *The Cat Who Went to Heaven* is about a Japanese artist who is commissioned by a priest to paint a picture of Buddha for the temple; Japanese history and cultural facts are woven throughout the story. A great book to use during a unit on World War II is the 1990 Newbery winner, *Number the Stars*. *The Bronze Bow*, which won the award in 1962, takes place during the Roman occupation of Israel. Two of the winners, *Lincoln: A Photobiography* and *Invincible Louisa: The Story of the Author of Little Women*, are biographies of historical figures.

American history is explored in many of the Newbery Medal winners. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* reveals much about the Puritan lifestyle in New England during the 1600s. *Johnny Tremain* is about a boy who finds himself a part of the Revolutionary War and intimately

associated with historical figures such as John Hancock and Samuel Adams. *A Gathering of Days* is the diary of a girl that shows the pioneer way of life during the mid-1800's. The 1986 winner, *Sarah Plain and Tall*, illustrates life on the prairie. The winner the previous year, *Rifles for Watie*, takes place during the Civil War.

Several of the Newbery Medal winners explore the African-American experience, from the time of slavery to the prejudice that existed decades after the Civil War. Occurring during the height of the slave trade, *The Slave Dancer* is about a boy forced to play his instrument on a ship to make the kidnapped Africans exercise. *Amos Fortune, Free Man* is based on the true story of a royal African man who is kidnapped, becomes a slave, and eventually earns his freedom. The 1977 winner, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, is a popular book for classroom use. Taking place during the 1930's in Mississippi, a black family experiences the heartbreaking results of racism. *Souder*, which won in 1970, also tells a story of racism. The African-American family works for a sharecropper but barely makes enough money to survive. Their mistreatment, such as the father's imprisonment for stealing food for his starving family, is explored.

*Geography.* Children's literature can be integrated into other subjects besides history. For example, the geography described in these books can be explored further. Students will be able to see the effects that geography has on particular stories. The geography of the Chesapeake Bay is an integral part of *Jacob Have I Loved*. Crabbing and boating are an important part of the story; life on the bay affects the people's livelihood and leisure activities. Teachers can also emphasize how weather affects particular stories, such as the frigid New England winters described in *A Gathering of Days* or the bitter mid-western winters in *Caddie Woodlawn*. The

Oklahoma drought and flat landscape caused the phenomenon of the dustbowl in *Out of the Dust*.

Teachers should ask students what role geography plays in the story.

### *Science Integration*

Science curriculum can also be enriched with literature. A great example is the 1989 Newbery winner, *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*. Paul Fleischman's book is a collection of poetry. Each poem is about a different insect, offering both entertaining and factual information on grasshoppers, water striders, mayflies, fireflies, lice, moths, wasps, cicadas, bees, beetles, crickets, and caterpillars. For example, the last poem, "Chrysalis Diary," can be used during a science unit that explores the changes that caterpillars experience in their transformation into a butterfly (Kerby, 1999). The scientific aspects of farming and plant growth may be taught in conjunction with books such as *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, *Out of the Dust*, or *Caddie Woodlawn*, in which the families rely on farming for their livelihood.

### *Fine Arts Integration*

Literature can even enrich music and art. The title of Mildred D. Taylor's Newbery Award winning book, *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*, is actually the title of a Negro spiritual.

The words of the song play an integral role in the theme of the book:

Roll of thunder  
 Hear my cry  
 Over the water  
 Bye and bye  
 Ole man comin'  
 Down the line  
 Whip in hand to  
 Beat me down  
 But I ain't  
 Gonna let him  
 Turn me 'round (Chapter 11).

The class can discuss the meaning of these lyrics. This may lead to a study of other Negro spirituals. Students could even learn to sing the songs. An activity such as this would integrate literature, history, and choir. *The Giver* is another great book to emphasize the value of the arts. Lowry describes a society where there is no music, color, individuality, or creativity. Students could discuss the ramifications of such a society and the important role the arts play in our world.

#### Readability Level of Newberys

When choosing appropriate literature for classroom use, educators need to consider the book's relevancy in the curriculum, students' interest, and the proper reading level to match with the student. (Tompkins, 2004). The most beneficial books match the student's interest level with their individual readability level. The readability level is defined as the "level of difficulty" (Leal, 1998, p. 712) of a particular book. Although the Newbery Award winners are supposed to be written for children fourteen years and younger, they tend to be written for children at the upper end of the criteria. They are best used with students in between grades five and eight. The average readability level is 6.8 (Kerby, 1999). The Newbery Medal books are not meant for younger students to read alone; the readability level is too difficult for children in the lower elementary grades. In fact, six percent of the Newbery Medal books have a readability level for ninth and tenth graders, which goes beyond the fourteen year old age limit outlined in the criteria (Leal, p. 712).

Leal (1998) researched the readability levels of the Newbery Medal books from 1922 to 1998 using the Fry Readability Formula. This formula randomly selects three 100-word passages in the book near the beginning, middle, and end. The grade level is determined by counting and averaging the number of sentences and the number of syllables in the passages.

None of the Newberys are below a fourth grade reading level. Thirteen-percent of the Newbery Medal books tested between the fourth and fifth grade reading levels. Twenty-four percent are at the sixth grade level. The highest percentage tested at a seventh grade readability level. A few are found to be at the ninth grade level, and the first book to win the Newbery even tested at the tenth grade level (Leal). On the following page is a listing of all the Newbery Medal books sorted by readability level. This chart can be used as a guide, not as a rigid listing, since the needs and interests of individual students and classrooms vary greatly.

Readability Levels for the Newbery Medalists

4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Level	<i>Shiloh</i> <i>Holes</i> <i>A Year Down Yonder</i>
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Level	<i>Strawberry Girl</i> <i>The Door in the Wall</i> <i>The Wheel on the School</i> <i>Carry on, Mr. Bowditch</i> <i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i> <i>Dear Mr. Henshaw</i> <i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i> <i>The Whipping Boy</i> <i>Joyful Noise</i> <i>Out of the Dust</i> <i>Bud, Not Buddy</i> <i>Crispin: Cross of Lead</i> <i>Kira-Kira</i> <i>Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!</i> <i>The Higher Power of Lucky</i>
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Level	<i>Roller Skates, Thimble Summer</i> <i>The Matchlock Gun</i> <i>Johnny Tremain</i> <i>Secret of the Andes</i> <i>...And Now Miguel</i> <i>Miracles on Maple Hill</i> <i>Rifles for Watie</i> <i>Onion John</i> <i>The Bronze Bow</i> <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> <i>From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler</i> <i>Julie of the Wolves</i> <i>M.C. Higgins, the Great</i> <i>Bridge to Terabithia</i> <i>A Visit to William Blake's Inn</i> <i>Maniac Magee</i> <i>Walk Two Moons</i> <i>A Single Shard</i>

	<i>Tale of Despereaux</i>
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Level	<i>Gay Neck</i> <i>The Cat Who Went to Heaven</i> <i>Waterless Mountain</i> <i>Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze</i> <i>Caddie Woodlawn</i> <i>The White Stag</i> <i>Call it Courage</i> <i>Miss Hickory</i> <i>King of the Wind</i> <i>Amos Fortune, Free Man</i> <i>Ginger Pye</i> <i>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</i> <i>It's Like This, Cat</i> <i>Shadow of a Bull, I, Juan de Pareja</i> <i>The High King</i> <i>Souder</i> <i>Summer of the Swans</i> <i>Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH</i> <i>The Slave Dancer</i> <i>The Grey King</i> <i>The Westing Game</i> <i>A Gathering of Days</i> <i>Dacey's Song</i> <i>Missing May</i> <i>The Giver</i> <i>The Midwife's Apprentice</i> <i>The View from Saturday</i>
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Level	<i>The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle</i> <i>The Dark Frigate</i> <i>Tales from Silver Lands</i> <i>The Trumpeter of Krakow</i> <i>Hitty, Her First Hundred Years</i> <i>Invincible Louisa</i> <i>Dobry</i> <i>Daniel Boone</i> <i>Adam of the Road</i> <i>The Twenty-One Balloons</i> <i>Roll of Thunder</i> <i>Hear My Cry, Jacob Have I Loved</i> <i>The Hero and the Crown</i> <i>Number the Stars</i> <i>Criss Cross</i>
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Level	<i>Smoky, the Cowhorse</i> <i>Rabbit Hill</i> <i>Up a Road Slowly</i> <i>Lincoln: A Photobiography</i>
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Level	<i>The Story of Mankind</i>

The study revealed that the Newbery books target children between the ages of nine and sixteen. Teachers may find it helpful to keep a list of books with the readability level provided

to help students pick books that are both appropriate and engaging for them. While the readability levels provide helpful guidelines, educators need to realize the wide range of reading levels represented by students in each grade. Teachers should expose students to books with higher readability levels, which provide breeding ground for classroom discussions and activities. When choosing books for classroom use, teachers must make sure students are challenged but not frustrated by the readability level (Leal, 1998).

### Sparkling Student Interest

When choosing literature, it is imperative that teachers pick books that are not only at the appropriate readability level but also must be appealing to students. Teachers should think of ways to spark students' interest. The first thing a teacher should do is get the students interested in particular titles so they will be more receptive. This may be done with book talks, plot summaries, telling students the background of the authors, how the author got their idea, or by showing relevant videos. Creativity is key. Teachers should select books to recommend carefully so that they will gain the students' trust. The teacher may highlight particular books in class through book talks (Kerby, 1999). She could read selections from many different books so that all students will find one that appeals to them. Careful consideration of which books to recommend will enable students to be exposed to quality literature that they may not have naturally chosen (Huck, 2002).

### *Interesting Newbery Facts*

As mentioned previously, a great way to spark a child's interest in a particular book is by telling them a unique fact about the book or the author. For example, the teacher could tell students that Russell Freedman, the author of *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, was constantly being sent to the principal's office as a child. He would often have to wait on the bench outside the

office. Hanging on the wall was a picture of Abraham Lincoln staring down at him. Jean Lee Latham, who wrote *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch*, began telling stories as a young girl to her brother as a bribe so he would help her wash the dishes after dinner. The author of *Call It Courage*, Armstrong Sperry, remembers having a difficult time in school. He longed to be outdoors instead of cooped up inside. He says he wanted to “throw all my schoolbooks out the window and stow away on the first ship I could find that was sailing south” (cited in Hegel, 2007, p. 32). His books reflect that desire he had as a child.

Students always ask how certain authors get their ideas for a particular book. Jean Craighead George was petitioned by Reader’s Digest to go to Alaska and research the animals and people there. Her article was never published in the magazine, but she used her findings to create *Julie of the Wolves*, which is about an Eskimo girl whose only way to survive is by joining a pack of wolves in the frigid wilderness. Lois Lowry found inspiration by talking to Craig Nelson, a famous painter who lost his sight. He told her how color adds beauty and richness to the human experience. This conversation led Lowry to write *The Giver*, which is a story about a society where there is no color and everyone is the same. The old man portrayed on the cover of the book is actually Craig Nelson himself. Rachel Field, the author of *Hitty: Her First Hundred Years*, found her inspiration when she saw an old doll in an antique store window. When Louis Sachar was writing the first draft of his popular novel *Holes*, he did not want to take the time to think of a last name for the main character Stanley. He simply scribbled out his first name spelled backwards for the time being. Later, he decided to keep the character’s name Stanley Yelnats (Hegel, 2007). The author of *Shiloh*, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, wrote the book to express her own personal feelings about a dog that had come into her life as a child (Kerby, 1999).

E.L. Konigsburg is the only author to receive two Newbery Awards in the same year. Her novel *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* received the Medal in 1968, while her other novel *Jennifer, Hecate, MacBeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth* won an Honor the same year (Hendershot, 1998). She won another Newbery Medal in 1997 for *The View from Saturday*. Before writing *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, Konigsburg requested permission from the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art to see parts of the museum that were normally closed to the public so she could research the setting of her book. When officials declined her request, Konigsburg still found the information she needed through a bit of “snooping” (Hegel, 2007, p. 32). Like Mrs. Frankweiler, Konigsburg clips out articles and pictures from newspapers that she finds interesting and keeps them in a special file. She gets many of her ideas for books by leafing through this file (Hendershot). Children find such facts fascinating, which may be the spark that causes them to pick up a quality book to read.

### *Daily Reading*

One of the most important things that the educational system should do is allow ample time each day for reading. Educators teach children the mechanics of reading without providing much time to actually read! They claim that there is not enough time with the pressures of other aspects of the curriculum. However, elementary and middle school is the age when children form their attitudes toward reading. What could be more important in the curriculum than promoting a love of reading? Teachers should be proactive about setting aside an adequate amount of time each day for literature. Give students an opportunity for free reading time in a pleasant environment (Huck, 2002). Students who have a positive view of reading associate it with learning, enjoyment, and consider it a good social experience, while those who dislike reading associate it with schoolwork, pronunciation, and social status. The goal of educators

should be to provide a positive view of reading for all students (Outz, 2003). Tompkins (1991) stresses the importance of literature: “Reading stories with students is more than simply a pleasurable way to spend an hour; it is how classroom communities are created” (p. 391).

Literature should be used both in free reading time as well as structured classroom activities.

### *Literature Activities to Implement in the Classroom*

When a class reads a particular book together, three types of activities should be utilized. “Intro-Activities” are used to grab the students’ attention and get them excited about the book they are about to read. “Through Activities” are administered while they are reading the book, mostly to aid in comprehension. “Beyond Activities” help students to think critically, see the book’s value, and relate it to their own personal lives (Licciardo, 1999, p. 5). Activity ideas include journals, murals, art, timelines, and maps (Huck, 2002). Consider Cynthia Kodohata’s *Kira-Kira*, the 2005 Newbery Medal winner. The story is about a Japanese-American family that moves from Iowa to Georgia. The main character, Katie, is close with her older sister Lynn. They learn about the importance of staying together as a family, overcoming prejudice, and taking care of each other through difficult circumstances. An example of an introductory activity would be to explain the definition of the word “kira-kira,” which means glittering or shiny in Japanese. In the book, Lynn uses it to describe the sky and people’s eyes. Have students think of their own examples of “kira-kira” and paint them on a class mural.

While reading the book, students could use a map of the United States to trace the journey the Takeshima family takes when they move from Iowa to Georgia. They could also calculate the number of miles they travel. After reading the book, students could write their reflection on a particular topic, picking one thing to write about from a list of choices given by the teacher. For example, why did the Takeshimas have to move across the country? Have you

ever had to move when you did not want to or had to do something that you had no control over? What feelings did you experience? Students could choose to write about the prejudice the family endured when they moved to Georgia. Why did people treat Katie and Lynn differently? Were they really any different from the other children in their class? Do people still act like this today? Is this attitude of prejudice reasonable? What should our attitude be toward people who are different from us? Another theme of the story is sacrifice. Children could describe the working conditions in the chicken factory. Why did the parents continue to work there? What things did Katie's mother and father sacrifice for their children? What have your parents sacrificed for you? Perhaps the dominant theme of the story is suffering and death. Students could explore this in their reflections. How did Katie's family respond when Lynn was diagnosed with lymphoma? How did Katie feel as she saw her sister suffer? Have you lost someone close to you? Another appropriate "beyond activity" would be to add more drawings to the "kira-kira" mural. At the beginning of the story, Katie and Lynn described tangible objects as "glittery." By the novel's end, Katie learns that family, love, attitude, and sacrifice can also be "kira-kira."

The School District in Beaverton, Oregon has implemented a successful program to promote enthusiasm in quality literature. Every year, the district holds a "mock Newbery" (Ruurs, 2008) competition. Each summer, a group of teachers and librarians chooses twelve books published that year which they believe have a chance of winning a Newbery Award. When school starts in the fall, fourth and fifth grade students go to the library to hear a book talk that summarizes each of the books. Students then vote on the books they find most intriguing. The six books that receive the highest number of votes become the books the children will read during the fall semester. They have the opportunity to discuss the books with each other as well

as blogging on the internet with students from other schools in the district. Students evaluate the books by thinking critically, presenting the positive and negative aspects of the selections, and expressing any concerns they may have. Right before the actual Newbery committee chooses the Medal and Honor books in January, students in Beaverton hold their own mock election. After they pick the “Newbery” winner for their school, they are very excited to see which book wins the real Newbery. Although the mock and the real Newbery winners rarely match, this activity continues to be popular throughout the school district. Students get involved in the process, practice critical thinking and evaluation skills, and get excited about literature (Ruurs).

### Conclusion

Incorporating quality children’s literature into the curriculum may be the single best way to encourage a love of reading. Many children begin to lose interest in reading after the age of thirteen; choosing the right books to expose students to is the key to reversing this trend. Reading should not be a rote activity consisting of boring textbooks and mind-dulling worksheets, but a pleasurable experience that students can look forward to every day. The goal is not to force students to read for a grade; rather, it is to show them the wonder of reading so that students will want to do so in their free time. Studies show that a person’s vocabulary development and knowledge about the world in general is directly proportional to the amount that person reads. Educators should be familiar with the vast array of children’s literature that is available to develop that love of reading while students are still young. While this task seems overwhelming, a review of award-winning books is the best and most feasible place to start. Among the 89 Newbery Medal winners and hundreds of Honor books, these books cover a huge range of topics and genres. Any child can find a quality piece of literature that appeals to him or her. The Newbery books educate as they entertain, providing the perfect breeding ground for

memorable classroom discussions and activities. Many of the Newberys contain multicultural themes, providing role models for minorities and showing how all humans – regardless of their culture, race, or background – experience the same emotions and conflicts. Literature can be integrated across the curriculum, making social studies, science, and music more meaningful to students. Books mirror reality and help students to understand the world in a richer context. By exposing students to quality literature, the quality which is espoused in the Newbery Award, teachers will help their students become lifelong readers...and lifelong learners.

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## Appendix

## Newbery Medalists, 1922-present

<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
1922	The Story of Mankind	Hendrik Willem van Loon
1923	The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle	Hugh Lofting
1924	The Dark Frigate	Charles Hawes
1925	Tales from Silver Lands	Charles Finger
1926	Shen of the Sea	Arthur Bowie Chrisman
1927	Smoky, the Cowhorse	Will James
1928	Gay Neck, the Story of a Pigeon	Dhan Gopal Mukerji
1929	The Trumpeter of Krakow	Eric P. Kelly
1930	Hitty, Her First Hundred Years	Rachel Field
1931	The Cat Who Went to Heaven	Elizabeth Coatsworth
1932	Waterless Mountain	Laura Adams Armer
1933	Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze	Elizabeth Lewis
1934	Invincible Louisa, The Story of the Author of Little Women	Cornelia Miggs
1935	Dobry	Monica Shannon
1936	Caddie Woodlawn	Carol Ryrie Brink
1937	Roller Skates	Ruth Sawyer
1938	The White Stag	Kate Seredy
1939	Thimble Summer	Elizabeth Enright
1940	Daniel Boone	James Daugherty

1941	Call it Courage	Armstrong Sperry
1942	The Matchlock Gun	Walter Edmonds
1943	Adam of the Road	Elizabeth Janet Gray
1944	Johnny Tremain	Esther Forbes
1945	Rabbit Hill	Robert Lawson
1946	Strawberry Girl	Lois Lenski
1947	Miss Hickory	Carolyn Sherwin Bailey
1948	The Twenty-One Balloons	William Pene du Bois
1949	King of the Wind	Marguerite Henry
1950	The Door in the Wall	Margarite de Angeli
1951	Amos Fortune, Free Man	Elizabeth Yates
1952	Ginger Pye	Eleanor Estes
1953	Secret of the Andes	Ann Nolan Clark
1954	...And Now Miguel	Joseph Krumbold
1955	The Wheel on the School	Meindert DeJong
1956	Carry on, Mr. Bowditch	Jean Lee Latham
1957	Miracles on Maple Hill	Virginia Sorenson
1958	Rifles for Watie	Harold Keith
1959	The Witch of Blackbird Pond	Elizabeth George Speare
1960	Onion John	Joseph Krumbold
1961	Island of the Blue Dolphins	Scott O'Dell
1962	The Bronze Bow	Elizabeth George Speare
1963	A Wrinkle in Time	Madeline L'Engle

1964	It's Like This, Cat	Emily Neville
1965	Shadow of a Bull	Maia Wojciechowska
1966	I, Juan de Pareja	Elizabeth Borton de Trevino
1967	Up a Road Slowly	Irene Hunt
1968	From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler	E.L. Konigsburg
1969	The High King	Lloyd Alexander
1970	Souder	William H. Armstrong
1971	Summer of the Swans	Betsy Byers
1972	Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH	Robert C. O'Brian
1973	Julie of the Wolves	Jean Craighead George
1974	The Slave Dancer	Paula Fox
1975	M.C. Higgins, The Great	Virginia Hamilton
1976	The Grey King	Susan Cooper
1977	Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry	Mildred D. Taylor
1978	Bridge to Terebithia	Katherine Paterson
1979	The Westing Game	Ellen Raskin
1980	A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal	Joan W. Blos
1981	Jacob Have I Loved	Katherine Paterson
1982	A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers	Nancy Willard
1983	Dacey's Song	Cynthia Voigt
1984	Dear Mr. Henshaw	Beverly Cleary
1985	The Hero and the Crown	Robin McKinley
1986	Sarah, Plain and Tall	Patricia MacLachlan

1987	The Whipping Boy	Sid Fleishman
1988	Lincoln: A Photobiography	Russell Freedman
1989	Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices	Paul Fleishman
1990	Number the Stars	Lois Lowry
1991	Maniac McGee	Jerry Spinelli
1992	Shiloh	Phyllis Reynolds
1993	Missing May	Cynthia Rylant
1994	The Giver	Lois Lowry
1995	Walk Two Moons	Sharon Creech
1996	The Midwife's Apprentice	Karen Cushman
1997	The View from Saturday	E.L. Konigsburg
1998	Out of the Dust	Karen Hesse
1999	Holes	Lois Sachar
2000	Bud, Not Buddy	Christopher Paul Curtis
2001	A Year Down Yonder	Richard Peck
2002	A Single Shard	Linda Sue Park
2003	Crispin: Cross of Lead	Avi
2004	The Tale of Despereaux	Kate DiCamillo
2005	Kira-Kira	Cynthia Kadohata
2006	Criss Cross	Lynne Rae Perkins
2007	The Higher Power of Lucky	Susan Patron
2008	Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Tales from a Medieval Village	Amy Laura Schlitz
2009	The Graveyard Book	Neil Gaiman