

YOUNGER READERS

For Kids, Young Adults, and Children of All Ages

BY WENDY MASS

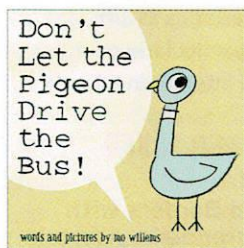
It's that time of year again: the American Library Association has chosen the winners of the 2004 John Newbery and Randolph Caldecott medals, the most prestigious awards in children's literature. A relative newcomer, the Michael Printz award for outstanding books for teenagers, joins these time-honored awards. In our Nov/Dec 2003 issue, we reviewed two of the award-winning books—this year's Newbery winner, *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo, and a Printz honor book, *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* by Carolyn Mackler. Here are the others, proclaimed to be the best of 2003.

Children

AGES 0-8

DON'T LET THE PIGEON DRIVE THE BUS!

By Mo Willems
★ CALDECOTT HONOR



A kindly bus driver asks just one thing of his passengers when he takes his break: "Don't let the pigeon drive the bus."

This is no easy task, as the pigeon is

determined to get behind the wheel. After many refusals by passengers and a terrible temper tantrum that many children will recognize, the pigeon starts to eye a nearby 18-wheeler...

"Pigeon is an unflinching and hilarious look at a child's potential for mischief.

... The genius of this book is that the very young will actually recognize themselves in it." DONA RATTERREE, SCHOOL

LIBRARY JOURNAL

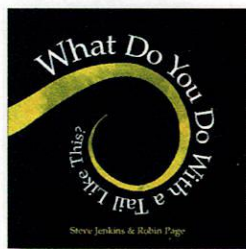
"Willems's animation background (on Sesame Street and the Cartoon Network) is used here to good effect.

... This well-paced story encourages audience interaction. In fact, like the wide-eyed pigeon, the book demands it."

KITTY FLYNN, HORN BOOK MAGAZINE

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A TAIL LIKE THIS?

By Robin Page, illustrated by Steve Jenkins
★ CALDECOTT HONOR



Noses, ears, eyes, tails, mouths, and feet! All animals have them, but each one is different. How can you tell whose nose is whose? On one spread we get five noses and the question, "What do

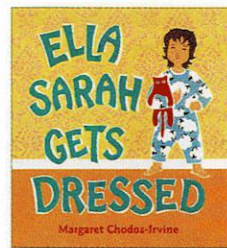
you do with a nose like this?" Turn the page and find out which nose belongs to what animal and how that animal uses said nose. Secrets of the animal kingdom are revealed!

"Jenkins' handsome paper-cut collages are both lovely and anatomically informative, and their white background helps emphasize the particular feature, be it the bush baby's lustrous, liquid-brown eyes or the skunk's fuzzy tail. This is a striking, thoughtfully created book with intriguing facts made more memorable through dynamic art." TIM

ARNOLD, BOOKLIST

ELLA SARAH GETS DRESSED

By Margaret Chodos-Irvine
★ CALDECOTT HONOR



Ella Sarah knows exactly what she wants to wear every day: "my pink polka-dot pants, my dress with orange-and-green flowers, my purple-and-blue striped socks, my yellow shoes, and my red hat!" Now if only her parents and big sister would listen instead of coming up with more "sensible" options!

"The exuberant illustrations, created using a variety of printmaking techniques, dance and tumble across the pages, adding emotion to her refrain. ... This should be a hit at storytime or for one-on-one sharing." LINDA M. KENTON,

SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

"Ella Sarah's body language, which goes from determined to dejected to defiant to dogmatic, contrasts with the posturing of her parents and sibling, seen from Ella Sarah's point of view, heads cut off by the picture plane. A wonderfully realized artistic conceit with a storyline guaranteed to tickle the fancy of baby fashionistas and their families." KIRKUS REVIEWS.

★ Caldecott Winner

THE MAN WHO WALKED BETWEEN THE TOWERS

By Mordicai Gerstein



With sparse text and illustrations so stunning and realistic they could give you vertigo, Gerstein captures the exuberance of Phillippe Petit, a young Frenchman, as he danced across a high wire strung between the two towers of the World Trade Center in 1974.

"A refreshingly original memorial to the vanished buildings."

ELIZABETH WARD, THE WASHINGTON POST

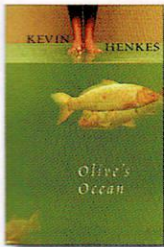
"Gerstein is in top form, pulling the reader into his story with a conversational style extended by playful pen and paint illustrations. Like Petit, Gerstein conceals much careful planning behind an obvious enjoyment of his subject." LOLLY ROBINSON, THE HORN BOOK

Intermediate

AGES 9-12

OLIVE'S OCEAN

By Kevin Henkes
★ NEWBERY HONOR



No one liked twelve-year-old Olive very much. But when she dies in a car accident, she leaves behind three last wishes—to be a writer, see the ocean, and befriend classmate Martha Boyle. Martha is devastated by Olive's death, and sets out to realize Olive's dreams.

"With his usual sensitivity and insight, Henkes explores key issues of adolescence. ... Readers can peer through this brief window into Martha's life and witness a maturation, as she becomes a young woman, appreciates life anew and finds a way to give something back to Olive." PUBLISHERS

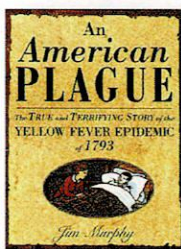
WEEKLY

"Well-plotted, the working out of Martha's feelings of humiliation, her renewed connection to family, and her final gesture towards the dead Olive are effected with originality and grace. Characters and setting are painted in with the deft strokes of an experienced artist." KIRKUS REVIEWS

AN AMERICAN PLAGUE

The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793

By Jim Murphy
★ NEWBERY HONOR AND ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD FOR MOST DISTINGUISHED INFORMATIONAL BOOK FOR CHILDREN.



In 1793, President George Washington fled from the clutches of Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic, which killed thousands of people. Original newspaper

headlines and archival images recreate the dread and panic of this bizarre illness.

"Murphy chronicles this frightening time with solid research and a flair for weaving facts into fascinating stories ..."

MARY R. HOFMANN, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

"Thoroughly documented, with an annotated source list, the work is both rigorous and inviting ... skillfully drawing out from these sources the fear and drama of the time and making them immediate to modern readers." ANITA L.

BURKAM, THE HORN BOOK

"Nobody does juvenile nonfiction better than Murphy. There are enough gruesome medical details to satisfy even the most ghoulish tastes, but also plenty of serious history, including a moving account of the largely unappreciated volunteer work of members of the Free African Society."

ELIZABETH WARD, THE WASHINGTON POST

Young Adults

AGES 13 AND UP

THE FIRST PART LAST

By Angela Johnson
★ MICHAEL L. PRINTZ AWARD AND THE CORETTA SCOTT KING AWARD



Sixteen-year-old Nia suffers from irreversible brain damage after the birth of her baby. Sixteen-year-old Bobby must now care for his daughter, Feather. The book alternates between Nia's pregnancy ("Then"), and the present reality of Bobby alone with the baby ("Now").

"... any flaws in the plot are overshadowed by the beautiful writing. Scenes in which Bobby expresses his love for his daughter are breathtaking."

MIRANDA DOYLE, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

"From the first page, readers feel the physical reality of Bobby's new world:

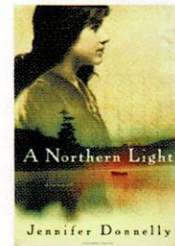
what it's like to hold Feather on his stomach, smell her skin, touch her clenched fists, feel her shiver, and kiss the top of her curly head. Johnson makes poetry with the simplest words in short, spare sentences that teens will read again and again." HAZEL ROCHMAN,

BOOKLIST

"There is believable language, with occasional swearing and some references to Bobby's sexual experiences with Nia, the baby's mother. ... Johnson has a way of getting to her readers' emotions with few words, creating characters we really care about." CLAIRE ROSSER, KLIATT

A NORTHERN LIGHT

By Jennifer Donnelly
★ MICHAEL L. PRINTZ HONOR



It's 1906, and 16-year-old Mattie isn't sure whether she should stay and help on her father's farm or go to college with the scholarship she has earned. Should she instead

marry a man who doesn't seem to love her? When confronted with a real-life murder mystery, she learns more about herself than she would have imagined.

"Jennifer Donnelly has populated her first young-adult novel with a community of distinctive characters who ring rich and true, and grounded it in the often horrific realities of rural life a century ago. We don't just root for Mattie; we come to understand and cherish her." SANDY MACDONALD, NEW YORK TIMES

BOOK REVIEW

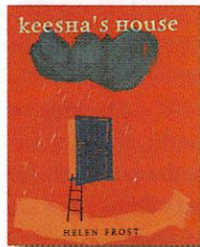
"Honest and unflinching in its portrayal of loss, poverty, racism, and pregnancy, it nonetheless avoids melodrama and polemic. And its witty and oddball supporting cast ... add complexity and color to Mattie's journey." COURTNEY

WILLIAMSON, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

KEESHA'S HOUSE

By Helen Frost

★ MICHAEL L. PRINTZ HONOR



Led by Keesha, who must escape her alcoholic father, seven troubled teens come together in the safe haven of a house owned by a man named Joe. Alone, they are lost. Together, they have hope, and pour out their hearts in verse.

"The story, told in the multiple voices of teens struggling to overcome adversity, trauma, and abuse, is realistically and evocatively told. This poem-story of sestinas and sonnets is a wonderful choice for reader's theater."

JENNIFER RALSTON, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

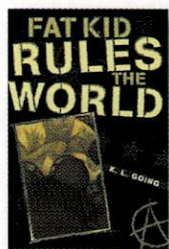
"With personal problems galore, these teenagers still find ways to reach out and help others in need. Spare, eloquent, and elegantly concise, Frost's novel will reach reluctant readers."

CYNTHIA WINFIELD, VOYA

FAT KID RULES THE WORLD

By K.L. Going

★ MICHAEL L. PRINTZ HONOR



At 17, Troy Billings is 6'1", 296 pounds, and unhappy. He even considers what would happen to his sizable girth if he stepped in front of an oncoming subway train. He is saved from finding out by his school's most famous dropout, Curt MacCrae, a punk-rock legend who convinces Troy to be the drummer in his band. There are serious issues here—homelessness, depression, drug use, loss of a parent—but you'll laugh so hard your sides will hurt.

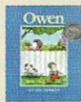
"Troy's voice is candid, irreverent, realistic, and humorous. ... There are many unexpected twists and turns, including the horrifying and hysterically

★ Past Works

Many of these honored authors and illustrators have had popular books in the past:



KATE DICAMILLO was the Newbery Honor winner in 2001 for her first novel, **Because of Winn-Dixie** (2000). Winn-Dixie is a big lovable dog who helps 10-year-old Opal learn about life, friendship, and forgiveness.



KEVIN HENKES won the 1994 Caldecott Honor for his book **Owen** (1993). A nosy neighbor convinces Owen's mother that kindergarten is too old for a boy to be carrying around a blanket. Henkes is well-known for his best-selling picture book **Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse** (1996). A spirited mouse named Lilly has a musical purse. When it's confiscated by her teacher, she hatches a scheme to get back at him. Only it backfires!



ANGELA JOHNSON has won the Coretta Scott King Award two other times—for her novels **Heaven** (1998), in which 14-year-old Marley learns that a family comes in many forms, and **Toning the Sweep** (1993), in which three generations of women share hardships and joys.



This isn't **STEVE JENKINS'** first animal book; he published **Slap, Squeak, and Scatter: How Animals Communicate** in 2001. Do you know what a honeybee is trying to say when it dances for its bee friends?



MARGARET CHODOS-IRVINE illustrated **Buzz** (2002). Everything is buzzing in the morning at one little boy's busily bustling buzzing house.



CAROLYN MACKLER'S first novel was **Love and Other Four Letter Words** (2000). Sixteen-year-old Samantha learns that "along with love comes other four-letter words. Like *hate*, obviously.... And *gain*. And most important, *grow*."

gross depiction of Troy's first gig."RENEE STEINBERG, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

"Going creates a completely credible picture of the New York punk-rock scene and makes us believe in Troy's bumpy journey toward becoming both a rock-band drummer and a true friend; in the process she identifies herself as one of the most promising new voices in YA fiction."CLAUDIA MILLS, CHILDRENS LITERATURE

"In her savvy and fast-paced debut... Going uses a fair amount of explicit language in her dialogue, but it lends an air of authenticity..."PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Editor's Note



We were first introduced to this issue's columnist, Wendy Mass, when we reviewed her book for intermediate readers, **A Mango-Shaped Space**, in our Nov/Dec 2003 issue. Now we're fortunate enough to have Wendy as a contributor. Which means we can unabashedly plug her latest release, **Leap Day**, about a girl who turns 16 on Leap Day, February 29th. The whole book takes place on that one day. Add it to your list!