

by Rosalyn M. Phillips

## Children

AGES 0-8

The winner of this year's Caldecott Medal, honoring the most distinguished American picture book for children, is a wonderful book about friendship:

### My Friend Rabbit

By Eric Rohmann

★ 2003 Caldecott Medal

Whether your young reader identifies more with the quiet, patient Mouse or the impulsive, energetic, Rabbit, both types of children will enjoy this story. Rabbit gets

Mouse's toy airplane stuck in a tree. In order to retrieve it and calm his friend, Rabbit convinces nearby

animals to stand one atop another to reach the airplane. A veritable zoo pyramid is formed: an elephant, a rhinoceros, a reindeer, a duck, and others. Children will have to turn the book vertically to see them all...before the animals topple to the ground. Luckily the plane is retrieved, and loyalty between the two friends, despite differences and exasperation, prevails.

(FOR AGES 4-8)

Trees and falling objects made us think of an alphabet classic:

### Chicka Chicka Boom Boom

By John Archambault, Bill Martin Jr. and Lois Ehler

"A told B, and B told B, I'll meet you at the top of the coconut tree."

And so goes the story of 26 letters climbing into the tree until...they topple to the ground. But don't worry, their capital letter parents come along to soothe "skinned-knee d and stubbed-toe e" as we cycle through the alphabet all over again. The rhyming text sounds musical so that even very young children enjoy hearing the book aloud. There's an audio version as well featuring Ray Charles, so that children can dance to the sounds of the alphabet. (FOR AGES 4-8, but the very young enjoy it too.)

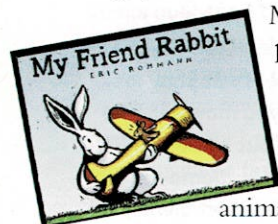


sider one small step closer to music and jazz:

### John Coltrane's Giant Steps

By Chris Raschka

Raschka's latest is yet another introduction to jazz and to music through watercolors and characters. Raindrops are used for the drums, boxes for the bass, snowflakes for the piano, and a cat for Coltrane's melodic saxophone. (John Coltrane and Julie Andrews aficionados will recognize these characters from "A Few of My Favorite Things.") They dance across the page with colors representing melody and harmony. No knowledge of "Giant Steps" is required and, unfortunately, the music is not packaged with



## Then 1974

### UNAWARDED CLASSICS AND SUBVERSIVE ELEPHANTS

In the midst of Newbery and Caldecott award winners, many great books go unawarded:

#### George and Martha

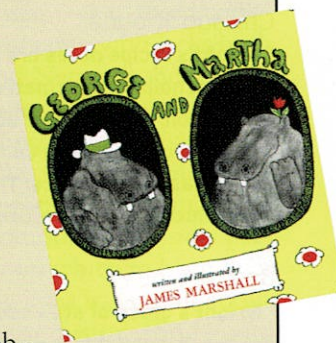
by James Marshall

In this book, and six more that follow, two hippopotami play practical jokes on one another.

Feelings get hurt, yet their loving relationship is obvious. (You may have seen an animated version of the George and Martha characters on HBO's Family channel.) A touching editorial in *The New Yorker* on the death of Marshall in 1992 said:

**"He would have liked to win the distinguished Caldecott Medal, but the nervy, slightly subversive tone of his books, along with their deceptive simplicity, kept him in a critical limbo. Still, his work effortlessly found its natural audience and certain of his characters...are as immortal as any that a writer or artist could reasonably hope to create."**

Doesn't that make you want to test your little loved one for a certain discernment? (FOR AGES 4-8)



the book. The *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed it one of the best children's books of 2002:

**"A must for jazz enthusiasts and, for first-timers, a clever introduction to this wildly creative musical genre."**

(TIMES DESCRIPTION TAKEN FROM PUBLISHERS WEEKLY.)

(FOR AGES 4-8)

For younger children, ages 2-5, consider the beautiful illustrations and simple narrative of:

### Hondo & Fabian

By Peter McCarthy

- ◆ 2003 Caldecott Honor Book
- ◆ One of The New York Times Book Review's 10 best illustrated books of 2002.



Hondo the dog travels to the beach to play with a canine friend; Fabian the cat stays around the house to pull the toilet paper and elude "the baby." After spending the day apart, the two animal friends come together, eat their dinners, and head off to their respective beds. The art is detailed pencil on watercolor paper, and the message is to make fun where you find it. *Hondo & Fabian* gives a sense of the arc of a day and is a peaceful book for bedtime.

(FOR AGES 2-5)

## Young Adult AGES 9 AND UP

The winner of this year's Newbery medal is set in 14th-century England:

### Crispin: The Cross of Lead

By Avi

A 13-year-old peasant boy, known only as "Asta's son," is on the run. His mother has just died, his father is presumed dead, and a priest tells him that his given name is actually

Crispin...right before the priest is killed. The manor steward declares him wanted, dead or alive. But why? In this page-turner mystery, Crispin falls in with a traveling juggler, Bear, who, of course, is not all he seems to be. Bear, with ties to an underground movement that becomes the peasant revolt of 1381, serves as mentor and protector to a boy whose lineage may be nobler than he thinks. Avi works in plenty of historical detail as well as treachery, mystery, and action.

(FOR AGES 10-14)

The winner of this year's:

- ◆ National Book Award for Young People's Literature and
- ◆ 2003 Newbery Honor Book:

### The House of the Scorpion

By Nancy Farmer

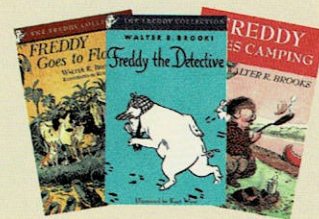
Our hero, Matt, is the 14-year-old clone of a powerful drug lord in the new country of Opium, lying between Mexico and the United States. Labor on these opium farms is performed by "eejits," humans with implanted computer chips to keep them docile. And Matt's not the only clone—the drug lord produces a horde of them for spare body parts to keep him living beyond his current 142 years. Is Matt human? What does it mean to be human? After his escape from Opium, can he return to right the wrongs he has witnessed?



*The New York Times Book Review* noted:

**"Although *The House of the Scorpion* is nominally science fiction, its conventions are primarily those of realistic fiction, with more than a whiff of the old-fashioned adventure tale, the kind we rarely see these days outside of the fantasy genre.... Although adults like to look for the social lesson in tales of**

## Then 1927



### FREDDY'S BACK

**"The moral center of my childhood universe, the place where good and evil, friendship and treachery, honesty and humbug were defined most clearly, was not church, not school and not the Boy Scouts. It was the Bean Farm."** ADAM HOCHSCHILD, NYTIMES

BOOK REVIEW, 1994.

The Bean Farm was the home of Freddy the Pig and the other talking animals, described by author Walter R. Brooks in 26 books, beginning in 1927 with *Freddy the Detective*. Some claim the series inspired George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, that it's the American version of *Winnie-the-Pooh* or *The Wind in the Willows*. The books went out of print in the late 1960's. Six titles were reprinted again in 1988, but *Freddy Goes Camping* sold "only" 16,000 copies. Unless a book reaches best-seller status these days, it is allowed to go out of print, as the series did in 1991. Hochschild lamented, "For books so widely beloved as classics, this seems outrageous." There has been much pleading for republication, and now we have another chance, as Overlook Press is publishing them again. Start with *Freddy the Detective*, then onto the very funny *Freddy the Magician*.

(FOR AGES 9-12)

**dreadful circumstance, kids know that trouble is more exciting than contentment."** ROGER SUTTON, EDITOR IN CHIEF OF THE HORN BOOK.

(FOR AGES 12 AND UP)