

**IN THE
WORDS
OF THE
WINNERS**

THE NEWBERY AND CALDECOTT MEDALS

2001-2010

**ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY
SERVICE TO CHILDREN**

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THE HORN BOOK

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CALDECOTT MEDALS
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Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 5 4 3 2 1

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ISBN: 978-0-8389-3586-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

In the words of the winners : the Newbery and Caldecott medals, 2001-2010 / Association for Library Service to Children and the Horn Book.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8389-3586-6 (alk. paper)

1. Newbery Medal--Bio-bibliography. 2. Caldecott Medal--Bio-bibliography. 3. Children's literature, American--Bio-bibliography. 4. Picture books for children--United States--Bio-bibliography. 5. Children--Books and reading--United States. I. Association for Library Service to Children. II. Horn Book, Inc.

Z1037.A2I52 2011

011.62'079--dc22

2010033258

Book design in Minion Pro and DIN by Casey Bayer.

Ⓢ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

ALA Editions also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. For more information, visit the ALA Store at www.alastore.ala.org and select eEditions.

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
The Changing Landscape of Children’s Book Publishing Roger Sutton	xi
Newbery Medal Books, 2001–2010 Nina Lindsay	xv
Caldecott Medal Books, 2001–2010 Joanna Rudge Long	xxi
2001 NEWBERY _____	
<i>A Year Down Yonder</i> , by Richard Peck	1
Author Profile, by Marc Talbert	6
CALDECOTT _____	
<i>So You Want to Be President?</i> illustrated by David Small	12
Illustrator Profile, by Patricia Lee Gauch	19
2002 NEWBERY _____	
<i>A Single Shard</i> , by Linda Sue Park	22
Author Profile, by Dinah Stevenson	29
CALDECOTT _____	
<i>The Three Pigs</i> , written and illustrated by David Wiesner	34
Illustrator Profile, by Anita Silvey	40

2003 NEWBERY	
<i>Crispin: The Cross of Lead</i> , by Avi	45
Author Profile, by Donna Bray	53
CALDECOTT	
<i>My Friend Rabbit</i> , written and illustrated by Eric Rohmann	56
Illustrator Profile, by Philip Pullman	62
2004 NEWBERY	
<i>The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread</i> , by Kate DiCamillo	66
Author Profile, by Jane Resh Thomas	71
CALDECOTT	
<i>The Man Who Walked between the Towers</i> , written and illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein	74
Illustrator Profile, by Elizabeth Gordon	79
2005 NEWBERY	
<i>Kira-Kira</i> , by Cynthia Kadohata	82
Author Profile, by Caitlyn M. Dlouhy	90
CALDECOTT	
<i>Kitten's First Full Moon</i> , written and illustrated by Kevin Henkes	97
Illustrator Profile, by Susan Hirschman	102
2006 NEWBERY	
<i>Criss Cross</i> , by Lynne Rae Perkins	106
Author Profile, by Virginia Duncan	113
CALDECOTT	
<i>The Hello, Goodbye Window</i> , illustrated by Chris Raschka	116
Illustrator Profile, by Richard Jackson	124

2007 NEWBERY		
	<i>The Higher Power of Lucky</i> , by Susan Patron	126
	Author Profile, by Virginia A. Walter	134
	Author Profile, by Richard Jackson	136
	CALDECOTT	
	<i>Flotsam</i> , written and illustrated by David Wiesner	138
	Illustrator Profile, by Dinah Stevenson	144
2008 NEWBERY		
	<i>Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!</i>	
	<i>Voices from a Medieval Village</i> , by Laura Amy Schlitz	147
	Author Profile, by Mary Lee Donovan	153
	CALDECOTT	
	<i>The Invention of Hugo Cabret</i> , written and illustrated by Brian Selznick	162
	Illustrator Profile, by Tracy Mack	168
2009 NEWBERY		
	<i>The Graveyard Book</i> , by Neil Gaiman	172
	Author Profile, by Elise Howard	179
	CALDECOTT	
	<i>The House in the Night</i> , illustrated by Beth Krommes	182
	Illustrator Profile, by Ann Rider	187
2010 NEWBERY		
	<i>When You Reach Me</i> , by Rebecca Stead	190
	Author Profile, by Wendy Lamb	196
	CALDECOTT	
	<i>The Lion and the Mouse</i> , illustrated by Jerry Pinkney	199
	Illustrator Profile, by Andrea Spooner	204
	Credits	209
	Index	211

PREFACE

I AM THRILLED to introduce *In the Words of the Winners: The Newbery and Caldecott Medals, 2001–2010*, compiled in collaboration with The Horn Book, Inc. This publication is a companion book to *The Newbery and Caldecott Medal Books, 1986–2000: A Comprehensive Guide to the Winners*, published by ALA Editions in 2001.

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), which administers the prestigious Newbery and Caldecott awards, and The Horn Book, Inc., which publishes children's book reviews and biographical essays about award winners, are pleased to team up once again to provide this unparalleled resource that is sure to interest librarians, educators, parents, and bibliophiles.

Award acceptance speeches by and biographical essays about each award-winning author and illustrator provide valuable and useful insight into the creative process of each work and the individual behind the pen or brush. *The Horn Book Magazine* reviews provide a glimpse of the outstanding qualities and subtle nuances that make each title medal-worthy. Essays penned by recognized authorities in the field of children's literature reflect back on the decade of winning books—how they stand individually and how they compare and contrast with their counterparts—and on changes in children's book

publishing, children's reading, and the ways we discuss literature and awards in this new century.

Nina Lindsay is the children's services coordinator for the Oakland Public Library, California. She served on the 1998 and 2004 Newbery and 2001 Sibert Award committees, and chaired the 2002 Sibert and 2008 Newbery committees. She coauthors *Heavy Medal: A Mock Newbery Blog* at the *School Library Journal* website, and has reviewed for *Kirkus*, *The Horn Book Magazine*, *School Library Journal*, and *Bayviews*. In her essay, Nina takes on the controversy and debate that are part of the Newbery standard and further evidence that the Newbery is the best-known and most discussed children's book award in this country.

Joanna Rudge Long, a regular contributor to *The Horn Book Magazine*, is a former editor and principal reviewer of young people's books for *Kirkus Reviews*. She has been a frequent core lecturer at Children's Literature New England and has taught children's literature at Rutgers and Trenton State universities. As a librarian, she served on numerous award committees, including the Newbery (1995) and Caldecott (1986) committees; in 2000 she chaired the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award committee. Her essay here skillfully explores the varied art techniques employed in each Caldecott Medal–winning book.

Roger Sutton has been the editor in chief of The Horn Book, Inc., since 1996. He began his career as a children's and young adult librarian in the public library setting. He has served on the Newbery and Caldecott committees and chaired the 2007 Wilder Award committee. With Martha V. Parravano, he is the author of *A Family of Readers: The Book Lover's Guide to Children's and Young Adult Literature* (Candlewick). Roger has written a contemplative piece that looks at publishing trends of the past decade and how they have affected the number of children's books eligible for award consideration.

ALSC would like to acknowledge and thank Roger Sutton and The Horn Book, Inc., for their willingness to continue this collaborative publication with us. We thank the essayists for their outstanding contributions. We also thank Laura Schulte-Cooper, ALSC communications program officer, for shepherding this project to publication, and Michael Jeffers, publisher of ALA Editions, and his staff, for continuing to recognize the value of this publication as a major contribution to the field of children's literature.

And thank you, reader, for your interest. We hope you will find this to be an exceptional volume. Ideas and suggestions for improving the work in future editions are always welcome.

Aimee Strittmatter

Executive Director, Association for Library Service to Children
American Library Association

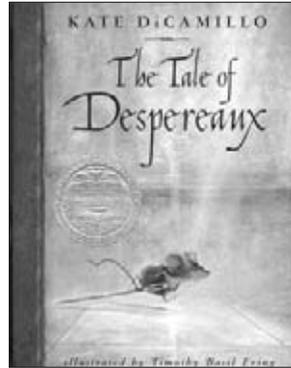
THE NEWBERY MEDAL 2004

The Tale of Despereaux
Being the Story of a Mouse,
a Princess, Some Soup,
and a Spool of Thread

written by
Kate DiCamillo

illustrated by
Timothy Basil Ering

published by
Candlewick, 2003



HORN BOOK REVIEW

Despereaux Tilling is not like the other mice in the castle. He's smaller than average, with larger than average ears. He'd rather read books than eat them. And he's in love with a human being—Princess Pea. Because he dares to consort with humans, the Mouse Council votes to send him to the dungeon. Book the First ends with Despereaux befriending a jailer who resides there. Books two and three introduce Roscuro, a rat with a vendetta against Princess Pea, and Miggery Sow, a young castle servant who longs to become a princess. Despereaux disappears from the story for too long during this lengthy middle section, but all the characters unite in the final book when Roscuro and Miggery kidnap Princess Pea at knifepoint and Despereaux, armed with a needle and a spool of thread, makes a daring rescue. Framing the book with the conventions of a Victorian novel ("Reader, do you believe that there is such a thing as happily ever after?"), DiCamillo tells an engaging tale. The novel also makes good use of metaphor, with the major characters evoked in images of light and illumination; Ering's black-and-white illustrations also emphasize the interplay of light and shadow. The metaphor becomes heavy-handed only in the author's brief, self-serving coda. Many readers will be enchanted by this story of mice

and princesses, brave deeds, hearts “shaded with dark and dappled with light,” and forgiveness.—*Peter D. Sieruta*

2004 NEWBERY ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Kate DiCamillo

About thirty miles west of Orlando is a small town called Clermont, and in that town is a library called the Cooper Memorial Library. When I was seven years old, the librarian there, a certain Miss Alice, stepped out of her office one day and stood beside me and put her hand on my shoulder and spoke the following words with a great deal of force and volume.

“Kate,” Miss Alice said to the person at the circulation desk, “is a True Reader! Therefore, the four-book maximum will be waived for her! She may check out as many books at a time as she likes!”

Miss Alice’s hand trembled on my shoulder as she said these words. Or perhaps my shoulder trembled beneath her hand. I cannot say.

All I know for certain is that her words, spoken so passionately, so fiercely, shaped me and helped me define who I was. Who was I? I was a True Reader!

I know, emphatically, that Miss Alice’s words are a part of the miracle of my presence here tonight. I also know, emphatically, that it is a miracle that I am here tonight at all.

And, in keeping with the nature of miracles, I am properly awed by it. I cannot explain it. I can, however, joyfully point to the many people who are a part of the miracle: Kara LaReau, my patient and daring editor who read the first seven pages of this book and said exactly the words I needed to hear: “More, please”; everyone at Candlewick Press who believed in my small mouse; Timothy Basil Ering, who brought the mouse to life; my mother, who read to me; my friends, who listened to me. Thank you.

And to the Newbery committee: thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you to each one of you for this miracle. Thank you, all of you, for believing in the power of stories.

Speaking of stories, I would like to tell you one. I grew up in Florida, but before Florida, until I was five years old, I lived in a house on Linden Lane in Philadelphia. The house was a large mock Tudor, and within it there were two stairways: the front stairs, which were light and bright and grand, adorned with a chandelier and lit further by tall windows above the landing; and the back stairs, which we called the servant stairs. These stairs ran from the kitchen to my brother’s bedroom, and they were dark and dismal and full of cobwebs and smelled of mildew and rot.

Also, according to my brother, the servant stairs were inhabited by trolls and witches. Because of this, my brother kept the door in his room that led to the stairs closed. He shoved a chair up against the door. He checked often to make sure the chair stayed in place. But sometimes, on weekend mornings, when he believed that the trolls and witches were sleeping, my brother would pull the chair aside and open the door and run down the servant stairs and emerge, triumphant and out of breath, into the kitchen.

I was four years old at the time of this story. My brother was seven, and we had a father who was a storyteller and a joke teller. Also, our father could laugh like a witch. The sound was terrifying: a high keening, a cackle that was almost, but not quite a scream. The witch's laugh made me shiver. It made my brother's teeth chatter, and this disgusted my father. He considered my brother a coward, and he told him, often, that he was too afraid of too many things. One Saturday, my father said to me, "Let's fix your brother. We'll give him a *real* scare. We'll hide in the servant stairs. And when he runs past us, you grab him, and I'll laugh like a witch."

Now you have to understand: no one knew better than I did how afraid my brother was of those stairs. No one knew better than I how much the witch's laugh terrified him. And the combination of those two things—the dark stairs; the witch's joyful, murderous scream—would, I thought, be enough to kill him.

No one knew better. But this is what I said to my father: "Okay."

I knew that if I said, "Let's not do this; it will scare him too much," my father would say, "Oh, you're just like him. You're a big scaredy-cat, too. What's the matter with you guys? You're no fun."

I wanted my father to think that I was brave. I wanted my father to think that I was fun. And so I said nothing.

Instead, I stood at the bottom of the servant stairs. I held my father's hand. I listened as, upstairs, my brother moved the chair aside and opened the door. I could have called out to him. I could have warned him. But I said nothing as he descended the stairs toward us.

I was four years old. And I knew that I was committing an act of great treachery.

That's it. That's the whole story. And it's not, I know, much of a story, but I'm telling it here because there are people who believe that stories for children should not have darkness in them. There are people who believe that children know nothing of darkness. I offer up my own four-year-old heart, full of treachery and deceit and love and longing, as proof to the contrary.

Children's hearts, like our hearts, are complicated. And children need, just as we do, stories that reflect the truth of their own experience of being human. That truth is this: we all do battle with the darkness that is inside of us and

outside of us. Stories that embody this truth offer great comfort because they tell us we do not do battle alone.

When I was five years old, we left the house in Philadelphia, but the stairs in that house stayed inside of me. They were carved in my heart, just as the memory of my treacherous act was imprinted there, shaping the person I became.

In Florida, however, two wonderful things happened. I learned to read. And then, safe within the magical confines of the Cooper Memorial Library, I met people in books who had conflicted, complicated hearts like my own. I met people who fought against their own jealousy, rage, and fear. And each page that I turned, each story that I read, comforted me deeply.

I have wanted, for a very long time, to tell the story of me and my brother and the servant stairs. But it was not until I sat down to write this speech that I realized I had, unwittingly, told the story already. It's all there in *The Tale of Despereaux*: the dungeon stairs and the castle stairs, the chandelier and the tall windows, the sibling betrayal and the parental perfidy.

Despereaux's story turns out differently than mine, of course. And part of the reason that it does turn out differently is that Despereaux reads, in a book in the library, the story of a brave knight. And at the moment when he must make a difficult decision, the mouse decides to act like that knight. He decides to act courageously in spite of his fear.

This is the other great, good gift of stories that acknowledge the existence of darkness. Yes, the stories say, darkness lies within you, and darkness lies without; but look, you have choices.

You can take action. You can, if you choose, go back into the dungeon of regret and fear. You can, even though there is every reason to despair, choose to hope. You can, in spite of so much hate, choose to love. You can acknowledge the wrong done to you and choose, anyway, to forgive.

You can be very small, as small as a mouse, and choose to act very big: like a knight in shining armor.

But none of these things, none of these shining moments, can happen without first acknowledging the battle that rages in the world and within our own hearts. We cannot act against the darkness until we admit it exists.

Thirty-five years after I stood at the bottom of those stairs and said nothing, I have started to forgive myself for not speaking up. I have begun, too, to forgive my father for what he did, for making me complicit in my brother's suffering.

This forgiveness that I am slowly approaching is the gift of the stories I have struggled to tell as truthfully as I can. And it is the gift, too, of each truthful, complicated, tragic, celebratory story that I have read.

Four years ago, when he was eight years old, my friend Luke Bailey asked me to write the story of an unlikely hero. I was afraid to tell the story he wanted

told: afraid because I didn't know what I was doing; afraid because it was unlike anything I had written before; afraid, I guess, because the story was so intent on taking me into the depths of my own heart.

But Luke wanted the story. I had promised him. And so, terrified and unwilling, I wrote *The Tale of Despereaux*.

Recently I had to make a very difficult decision. I had to be brave, but I did not want to be. I had to do the right thing, but I did not want to do it. Late at night, as I lay in bed agonizing over this decision, a friend called me up. She had received a letter from one of her students. The letter was written by a group of third graders at Talmud Torah in St. Paul, Minnesota, who had just finished reading *The Tale of Despereaux*. Each child said in one sentence what they thought of the book. I'd like to read you a few of those sentences:

"You taught us how to do what is right the way Despereaux did."—*Chaim*

"You inspired me to have courage."—*Jonah*

"You inspired us to believe in ourselves."—*Gabi*

And my favorite:

"I think that it was an all-right book."—*Ernie*

At the exact moment when I needed it, those kids gave me the courage I lacked, the courage they had gotten from a book that I had written even though I was afraid.

And this, finally, is the miracle of stories: together, we readers form a community of unlikely heroes. We are all stumbling through the dark. But when we read, we journey through the dark together. And because we travel together, there is the promise of light.

Einstein said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is."

Tonight, I choose to believe that everything is a miracle. It is a miracle that I am here. It is a miracle every time I find comfort and courage in books. It is a miracle that we can live in this world long enough to learn how to be brave, long enough to learn how to forgive.

I accept this award tonight. I know that I don't deserve it, but I accept it . . . for all of us—True Readers, Unlikely Heroes—in honor of our shared journey toward the light.

Kate DiCamillo



SHE'S A FIREFLY, this Kate DiCamillo, and who would want to catch a firefly? Having caught one in a jar, who would think that this captured thing was what he was after? I like my fireflies best in the wild, on the wing, out there in the tall grass at the edge of the woods. This account, on behalf of Kate's friends, is therefore only a glimpse.

She's a loyal friend, our Kate. She forgives us our failings, which remind her that we are as human as she. Our wooden legs amuse her. They provide her with proof that, as she suspected, life is not only a dire enterprise but also a hilarious joke, a game played by half-wits, all of us, doing the best we can—a best that, at best, is farce. At the same time, she witnesses the paradox that a man or a mouse may transcend absurdity and rise to heroism.

Kate takes delight in the incongruities of mankind, that glorious ruin. Nothing pleases her more than a man dressed up in an Easter Bunny suit smoking a cigarette out behind the strip mall. Well, one thing pleases her more—the ramshackle wreck who enters the restaurant where she and I are eating sandwiches. As he sits down behind me, Kate's eyes sparkle at the incongruity between this unfortunate and the grandiose view of humanity with which we all delude ourselves, but she observes with such empathy that tomorrow she will make of him a poignant anti-hero, a revelation of our universally woeful condition.

She's a scamp, Kate DiCamillo is, who loves to scare the horses and shock the prigs. She can belch like a truck driver, and the most outrageous remarks issue from her mouth, but those who prove to be neither horses nor prigs hear the wisdom and tenderness that follows. A phone call or an e-mail comes from her that begins, "Listen to this!" Then, in the manner of someone presenting a Ceylon sapphire in a satin-and-velvet box, she offers a gift: a paragraph from Isak Dinesen, a story from Russell Hoban or George Saunders or Alice Munro. Kate is better acquainted with contemporary literature than anyone else I know. "Listen to this!" she says, and we do listen, for what follows might be something as wonderful as lines from Antonio Machado's poem "Last Night," in which the speaker dreams that bees have built a hive in his heart and are "making . . . sweet honey from my old failures." Writers need the promise that Machado's dream offers, as they struggle to overcome their failure to gain

acceptance for their work and to satisfy themselves. The promise means so much to Kate that she commissioned a friend who has a gift for needlework to stitch Machado's lines into a woolen wall hanging, which Kate then gave away to a writer friend.

Five years before I met her, Kate confronted a question like the one Mary Oliver asks in "The Summer Day":

*Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

Kate answered that if she were ever going to write, she had better begin.

Having begun, she was a dogged worker. To make a living in Florida, she directed shuffleboard at a trailer park, or said, "Look down, and watch your step," to a never-ending line of thrill seekers at Disney World. Such jobs, of course, were never her real work. In the seven years since she and I met in Minneapolis, she has earned her bread at a book warehouse, sold hot dogs at a park, and tended the children's department at a used bookstore. Her many menial jobs enabled her to rent a small apartment and to feed herself, primarily on bean sandwiches. (Her cooking skill might add up to boiled water or a fried egg, if she owned a kettle or a skillet.) She didn't have the cash, though, to buy a cup of coffee in a shop, or enough to repair the defunct heater in her tin-can car when the temperature in Minneapolis was thirty degrees below zero.

Her true work was her writing. Before she went to the book warehouse every morning, she woke up at four thirty to write. Every morning, without fail. She read about writing. She studied the methods of the writers she read. She collected rejections, 470 at last count. (Yes, 470. The bees have made sweet honey indeed from her old failures.) When *Because of Winn-Dixie* found her, she was ready for it. She knew then how to write it and how to cope with rejections and lukewarm editorial responses. At about the same time, she won a large grant from a Minnesota institution, the blessed McKnight Foundation, for a short story she wrote for adults.

When *Because of Winn-Dixie* came along, Kate said she had found her voice and her *métier*. The first time she read from the novel in my hearing, it was worthy of publication. Before anybody else had laid an eye on it, the work was so astonishing in its voice and originality and in the quality of its craftsmanship and the depth of its emotion that I said to her, "You're going to be famous."

Among her many virtues is the fact that Kate never writes the same book twice. Her versatility has enabled her to depart in voice and mode from each of her successes, with *The Tiger Rising*, and *The Tale of Despereaux*, and the several other books that are progressing now toward publication. Yes, she continues to

write, every day when she isn't in a plane or a hotel, for what has her success won her if not the wherewithal to write whatever her spirit moves her to say?

Kate DiCamillo's friends rejoice in the recognition the world has given her. We try to protect her from writer's envy, including our own, and from her own highly developed devotion to duty, for she is beloved among us. As Mr. White told us, in *Charlotte's Web*, "It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer." We are grateful that sometimes Kate casts her firefly light on us.

THE CALDECOTT MEDAL 2008

The Invention of Hugo Cabret

written and illustrated by
Brian Selznick

published by
Scholastic, 2007



HORN BOOK REVIEW

Here's a dilemma for the Newbery committee . . . and the Caldecott: what do you do with an illustrated novel in which neither text nor pictures can tell the story alone? Not to mention the drama to be found in the page turns themselves. A brief introduction sets the time (1931) and place (Paris) and invites readers to imagine they're at the movies. And with a turn of the page, they are, as, over a sequence of twenty-one double-page wordless spreads, a story begins. A picture of the moon gives way to an aerial shot of Paris; day breaks as the "camera" moves into a shot of a train station, where a boy makes his way to a secret passage from which, through a peephole, he watches an old man sitting at a stall selling toys. Finally, the text begins: "From his perch behind the clock, Hugo could see everything." The story that follows in breathtaking counterpoint is a lively one, involving the dogged Hugo, his tough little ally Isabelle, an automaton that can draw pictures, and a stage magician turned filmmaker, the real-life Georges Méliès, most famously the director of *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). There is a bounty of mystery and incident here, along with several excellent chase scenes expertly rendered in the atmospheric, dramatically crosshatched black-and-white (naturally) pencil drawings that make up at least a third of the book. (According to the final chapter, and putting a metafictional spin on things, there are 158 pictures and 26,159 words in the book.) The interplay between the illustrations (including several stills from Méliès's frequently surreal films and others from the era) and text is complete genius, especially in the way Selznick moves from one to the other, depending on whether words or images are the better choice for the moment.

And as in silent films, it's always just one or the other, wordless double-spread pictures or unillustrated text, both framed in the enticing black of the silent screen. While the bookmaking is spectacular, and the binding secure but generous enough to allow the pictures to flow easily across the gutter, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is foremost good storytelling, with a sincerity and verbal ease reminiscent of Andrew Clements (a frequent Selznick collaborator) and themes of secrets, dreams, and invention that play lightly but resonantly throughout. At one point, Hugo watches in awe as Isabelle blithely picks the lock on a door. "How did you learn to do that?" he asks. "Books," she answers. Exactly so.—*Roger Sutton*

2008 CALDECOTT ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Brian Selznick

The speech I am about to deliver takes place in 2008, under the roofs of Anaheim. It concerns a young boy named Hugo Cabret, who once, not that long ago, starred in a book that changed his life forever.

But before we turn the page, I want you to picture yourself sitting in the darkness, like the beginning of a movie. You'll remember how you zoomed toward a hotel in the middle of the city, rushing through the halls into a crowded ballroom. On screen, you will eventually spot a boy, asleep in his secret apartment. Watch out for him, because this is Hugo Cabret. He's unaware that in a city he's never heard of, a man he doesn't know has taken the stage, and a speech all about him has just begun.

Which brings us to tonight.

The Caldecott Medal was first presented in 1938, having been established the year before by a man named Frederic G. Melcher, who in 1921 had also created the Newbery Medal. For the Caldecott, his intention was to honor the work done in picture books by American illustrators. But right from the start, there was a question of what exactly defined a picture book. In her *History of the Newbery and Caldecott Medals*, Irene Smith states that Melcher believed that the "dominant feature must be the work of the artist."

When I began work on *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, I had no idea that the "dominant feature" would be the work of the artist; that the story would be told so prominently through images. So tonight, members of the Caldecott committee, esteemed colleagues, fellow honorees, friends, and family, I'd like to talk a little bit about how I came to make a 550-page picture book.

The story begins, as everything does, with childhood. I grew up drawing, reading books, and watching movies. I had my favorites, and among them were the artist Leonardo da Vinci, the hilarious picture book *Fortunately* by Remy

Charlip, and the movie *King Kong*, produced by my grandfather's first cousin David O. Selznick. I eventually grew up and became a writer and illustrator of children's books, a job that combines all my childhood loves. But about five years ago I came to an impasse. I needed some kind of change, even though I didn't know what, exactly. Something about my work wasn't satisfying me. I stopped illustrating. Everything came to a standstill. I grew quite depressed.

This lasted for six months.

During this time, there was one thing that graced my life and saved me from going completely crazy. I met Maurice Sendak.

He talked to me about my work, which he said showed great promise, but he steadfastly maintained that I hadn't come close to reaching my full potential yet. These words resonated with me very strongly. I think I had secretly felt the same way. I talked to him about how lost I felt, about how I didn't know what I should do next. His words were simple but powerful: "Make the book you want to make."

I didn't know what that meant at the time. I had no new ideas.

So, with nothing else to do, I decided to turn this period of my life into a sort of apprenticeship to Sendak, even if he didn't fully know it. I surrounded myself with the things he loved, like *Moby-Dick*, Mozart, and the paintings of Vincent van Gogh, and I studied Sendak's own work even more closely. I read, and I tried to leave myself open for things to come. But as for my own work, I created nothing.

The Invention of Hugo Cabret grew out of this period in my life. I came across a book called *Edison's Eve* by Gaby Wood, where I learned that Georges Méliès, the man who made the first science-fiction movie, *A Trip to the Moon*, in 1902, had owned a collection of automata, and at the end of his life they'd been destroyed and thrown away. I had seen *A Trip to the Moon* long ago and loved it. As soon as I learned about Méliès's lost automata, I suddenly, mysteriously, imagined a boy climbing through the garbage and finding one of those broken machines. It was almost like a flash of light had gone off in my head. Here was the beginning of a story.

Perhaps this was the book that Sendak was talking about.

I was both greatly relieved and terrified, because it quickly became clear that this book would incorporate everything I'd learned about bookmaking up to this point, while at the same time it would be unlike anything I'd made before. I wanted to create a novel that read like a movie. What if this book, which is all about the history of cinema, somehow used the *language* of cinema to tell its story? How could I do this?

I looked to picture books for the answer.

And the secret was in the page turns.

Think about the wild rumpus in *Where the Wild Things Are*. The pictures grow until they take over the entire book and there is no more room for words. Only the reader turning the page can move the story forward. We are put in charge at the exact moment Max himself takes charge. We become Max, all because of the page turns.

Think about my favorite childhood book, *Fortunately*, by Remy Charlip, which employs page turns so brilliantly to tell its story. We watch what happens as Ned, page by page, tries to get from New York to a surprise party in Florida. Having *fortunately* borrowed a friend's airplane, which has *unfortunately* exploded, he *fortunately* finds himself with a parachute that *unfortunately* has a hole in it, and so on. The story moves forward after each line of text, always bringing a surprise when we turn the pages.

Through my friend Dan Hurlin, I met Remy Charlip a few years ago, and we became friends. This friendship is one of the great joys of my life. I was so excited to meet the creator of *Fortunately* and to really get to know him. While I was working on *Hugo*, I tried to explain to him what my book was going to be about and how I wanted to use page turns. He said, "Oh, I wrote something about that a while ago. I'll send it to you." This brilliant little essay, called "A Page Is a Door," ends with this paragraph:

A book is a series of pages held together at one edge, and these pages can be moved on their hinges like a swinging door. . . . Of course if a door has something completely different behind it, it is much more exciting. The element of delight and surprise is helped by the physical power we feel in our own hands when we move that page or door to reveal a change in everything that has gone before, in time, place, or character. A thrilling picture book not only makes beautiful single images or sequential images, but also allows us to become aware of a book's unique physical structure by bringing our attention, once again, to that momentous moment: the turning of the page.

In the end, Remy posed for me as Georges Méliès because of his uncanny resemblance to the filmmaker, and I'm extremely proud that he is one of the stars of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. Amazingly, Remy told me that he's long loved Méliès and that he even used drawings by Méliès as inspiration for pictures in one of his books. It is beautiful little coincidences like this, which occur again and again while I work, that convince me I must be on the right path.

I SHOULD MENTION here that *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* would not exist at all without my editor at Scholastic, Tracy Mack. The first book we did together, in 1995, was Pam Conrad's *Our House*, and since then Tracy has pushed me to

be a better artist and writer than I ever could have been without her. From the moment I told her I wanted to write about a boy who meets a famous French filmmaker, she and editor Leslie Budnick embraced the story and the format and helped me craft every line, every word, every image. I share this award with them and will forever be grateful for their guidance and friendship. Thank you, Tracy and Leslie.

And I must extend these thoughts to art director David Saylor, who, along with his partner Charles Kreloff, made the book more beautiful than I could have imagined. I must also thank Scholastic Press for publishing *Hugo* so exquisitely. Everyone understood that even though *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is a book about movies, and it's told *like* a movie, the main concern was still *the book*. We wanted readers to be aware of the object in their hands, to fall in love not just with Hugo but with the book itself, the thing with covers and pages and pictures and words.

While I was making *Hugo*, I also shared early drafts with friends who helped me with the story. I have to especially thank Pam Muñoz Ryan and Sarah Weeks for their insights and comments. You helped make Hugo the man he is today.

THIS SPEECH PROBABLY should have begun slightly differently. It should have begun with the door opening into Eeyore's Books for Children in 1989, because this is where my life in children's books really started.

The manager of the store took me under his wing, and I learned what it meant to truly be a bookseller . . . getting the right book into the right child's hand, something everyone in this room has in common in one way or another. I also learned how difficult this could be. I remember the time a customer, an elderly woman, wanted a book for her grandchild. Nothing I recommended was right: one book was too long, one too short; the pictures were not good enough, or bright enough, or engaging enough. Finally, in desperation, I said, "Here, this book is a classic. Your grandchild will love it. It's Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*." She looked at it and said, "They're Jewish. Do you have it without the ham?"

When I was finally ready to start making my own book, it was the manager at Eeyore's and his girlfriend who helped me first get published. The manager soon left the store and eventually became a wonderful editor himself. Steve Geck, now at Greenwillow, married his then-girlfriend Diana Blough, now at Bloomsbury, and I must say a profound "thank you" to you both. In so many ways, I'm here tonight because of you.

Noel Silverman has been my lawyer, advisor, and very close friend since my first book was published, and I have to thank you for all your guidance and wisdom.

Thank you especially to my parents, Lynn and Roger Selznick, who have been endlessly supportive. My mom traveled with my first book in a Ziploc baggie in the trunk of her car in case she ran into anyone who hadn't seen it.

My dad, an accountant who had wanted to be an archaeologist, never liked his job, and because of this, both my parents made sure their three kids followed their dreams. As a kid, I wanted to be an artist, my sister wanted to be a kindergarten teacher, and my brother wanted to be a brain surgeon, and that's what we're each doing today.

My dad died just before I began work on *Hugo*, and for a long time while I was writing the story I didn't know what was going to happen to Hugo's father. I didn't want Hugo's father to die, so I kept him alive. But there were huge holes in the story—the plot simply wasn't working. I still remember the moment when I realized what needed to happen. It was a profound and complicated moment. I was sad, but also uplifted. Hugo's father's death gave reason to the entire story. It meant everything that happens to Hugo would be connected to *his* father. I discovered, a year into writing the book, that it was his love for his father that gives the plot power and meaning and makes the story matter, for Hugo himself, for me as the creator, and hopefully, by extension, for the reader.

I certainly don't have the words to thank my boyfriend, David Serlin. I think I can only be described as *unbearable to be around* while I'm working. If he says, "Your drawings look good," I get angry because he obviously knows nothing about art and can't see all the flaws that I'm trying to fix. And if he says nothing, then I get mad at him for being unsupportive. He's really in a no-win situation, yet he manages to handle me with patience and understanding and love. He's a brilliant thinker, a respectful listener, and, well, I'll say it again, a very, very patient man. I know that I wouldn't be here tonight without you, D. Thank you.

And finally, to Karen Breen and the Caldecott committee, thank you for this great honor. Tonight's banquet marks the seventieth anniversary of the Caldecott Medal, Frederic G. Melcher's brainchild. Melcher wanted to define what exactly picture books were and how best to honor them. I think he would be proud to see that his intentions are still being discussed so seriously, and that we are still passionately debating what exactly a picture book *is*.

But however we choose to define or label them, I think the most important thing to remember is that kids want good books, with good stories. That's what we're here to provide—books that are serious, or funny, or true, or made up. We need to give children the books they want, and the books that they don't yet know they want. And sometimes, we have to remember, the one thing a child *really* wants in their book is a little bit of ham.

Brian Selznick



THE AMAZING BRIAN SELZNICK: A PROFILE IN THREE ACTS

ANY PROPER INTRODUCTION to Brian Selznick should open with red velvet curtains.

Close your eyes and imagine said curtains draped elegantly across a grand stage. Now picture the curtains parting to reveal an elaborately designed set. Dramatic music rises. Our star steps into the spotlight. He is tall, lean, bespectacled, and, most notably, poised. In his finely tailored suit, he is classically handsome, with dark, wavy hair; dancing brown eyes; and a beguiling, ready laugh. Even from your seat in the audience, you can feel his warmth, his coltish energy, his passion and charisma. And suddenly you know you would travel anywhere with him—London, Paris, Washington, D.C., the moon!

Now you have a sense of how it feels to work with Brian.

ACT I: ARTIST

Each time art director David Saylor and I begin a new book with Brian, it is like setting out on a bold adventure. There is a tremendous spirit of collaboration, dedication, trust, respect, and fun. Those qualities have accompanied all eight books we have worked on together.

When Brian and I first met in 1995, I was a fledgling associate editor apprenticing with the legendary Jean Feiwel, and he was a fledgling artist who had recently left his job at Eeyore's Books for Children in Manhattan to work full-time as a freelance illustrator. Jean and I were looking for the right illustrator for Pam Conrad's *Our House: The Stories of Levittown*. As a huge fan of *The Houdini Box*, I suggested Brian, and was thrilled when Jean agreed.

Browsing through the *Our House* file recently, I was appalled to discover that I had written a detailed illustration list for Brian, suggesting *exactly* what he should draw. (Clearly, I had a lot to learn.) Luckily for me, Brian didn't balk or back out. In fact, he dove in with fervor. He made a trip to Levittown, toured the town and surrounding areas with Pam, met with the local librarian, dug around in the library's archives, took tons of photos, read tons of books, and followed his immense curiosity wherever it led him. He then created fourteen beautiful little pen-and-ink drawings, each one filled with detail and feeling.

Tireless and meticulous, he poured his whole heart into the project, giving it as much attention, respect, and care as if it were his own.

From the very beginning, Brian has shown a kind of reverence for creativity. And his studio is a sanctuary for it. Books, toys, handmade sculptures that serve as models for his characters, paintings, props, and miscellaneous collections surround his work in progress, laid out on his drafting table and pinned to the walls. In someone else's space it might look cluttered, but in Brian's it is harmoniously arranged and inviting, as though you have stepped into a mini-museum of the artist's mind.

Every time I visit, I am amazed to see how Brian weaves his vast and wide-ranging interests (from Houdini to robots to movies) into his work in a way that is both fascinating and accessible. Everything flows together seamlessly. The seeds of an idea he used in one book might flower in another. It is all part of a beautiful continuum.

When a new book is in progress, Brian frequently comes in to Scholastic to talk to us about his broad vision as well as details he might have uncovered in his research and is eager to include. Nearly always, he brings pint-sized sketch dummies. Rather than having us review thumbnail sketches on a single flat page, he wants us to hold these three-dimensional mini-books, turn the pages, and feel the story's visual flow and dramatic build. The dummies are always enormously helpful. They allow us to see exactly how the book will unfold—no surprises at a stage too late to fix. They also give us the time to be creative with other aspects of the bookmaking, from the jacket design to the endpapers.

Then there are the times we don't hear from Brian for weeks. After one of his vanishing acts, invariably, he shows up in our offices—looking a little tired, a little thinner, but somehow still radiating that quintessential Brian energy—and delivers all of his final artwork *early*.

Brian's attentiveness to the page turn and his love of the book as an object began early on and has culminated in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, for which he created numerous half-pint-sized dummies, detailing all of the 284 drawings that would ultimately appear in the book. His vision for how the pictures would unfold and advance the plot was so strong that, while the text underwent several rounds of revision, only a handful of the illustrations that appeared in those early sketch dummies were changed or dropped.

Brian has lots more ideas for how to experiment with the page turn and the book as an object, and this is one of the things I find most exciting about working with him: he continues to challenge himself, push the boundaries of what's been done before, and surprise us with his inventions. My job is to trust his vision, encourage him to follow his instincts, ask questions, and occasionally nudge him in one direction or another. I don't tell him what to draw anymore.

After *Hugo Cabret* came out, people asked me if it was scary to publish such a risk-taking book. To me, it never felt risky. Innovative, groundbreaking, and different, to be sure, but there was nothing uncertain about it. It was a big leap in Brian's evolution as an artist—but still part of that beautiful continuum.

ACT II: SHOWMAN

Some of you know that Brian is also a puppeteer. He has worked with the world-renowned puppet master Basil Twist and has created three productions of his own. Performing Twist's "Symphonie Fantastique," Brian made me feel joy and sadness simply by manipulating strips of colored cloth. In his own "The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins" (adapted from his and Barbara Kerley's book of the same title), a little dinosaur bone inspired awe as it "narrated" the story, floating around an antique desk (piled with dirt to resemble an archaeological dig) and over boxes, books, and cabinets—which opened to reveal miniature dioramas! Brian's imagination, much like a film or theater director's, works as well in three dimensions as in two.

Like all good showmen, Brian is spontaneous. He can speak thoughtfully and articulately without notes. He is quick-witted. He can find humor in just about anything, including himself. And he has a big imagination. This quality revealed itself to me early on when Brian invented a parade.

Three months after *Our House* was published, Pam Conrad died from an illness she'd been bravely fighting for years. Even though we had known her only a short time, Brian and I were deeply affected by her death and wanted to find a way to honor her life. So, in the fall of 1996, when the Levittown children's librarian, Mary Ann Donato, called Brian to let him know about a parade the town was hosting to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary, we were excited. Of course we would come, Brian told her. We would march in Pam's honor.

We'll have to dress up, Brian told me. Everyone will be in costume. Really? I asked. Oh, yes, he assured me. We would dress as the first citizens of Levittown, from the 1940s. And I was not to worry—Brian had a friend who was a costume designer for the theater, and she would lend us what we needed. He came to my apartment a few weeks later with bags of clothing and accessories. Like a child eagerly anticipating his first school play, he couldn't wait for the big day. He'd even made a beautiful sign with the book jacket on one side and the words "In memory of Pam Conrad, who loved Levittown" on the other.

As it turned out, we were the only ones in costume. Brian just chuckled, and for several hours we proudly carried our sign alongside cheerleaders, police officers, and marching band members. From the sidewalk, kids called out, "Look, it's grandma and grandpa!"

I've been carried along by Brian's imagination ever since.

ACT III: FRIEND

Not only are Brian's artistic talents limitless and his showmanship heartfelt, but his spirit is large and generous. Even after completing a project, he doesn't feel finished until he personally thanks all the people who helped him along the way.

In 2006, after we sent *Hugo Cabret* off to the printer, Brian made the whole team handcrafted antique clockworks, each one mounted on a little red velvet bed and tucked inside a glass case. I know that Brian had very little time to come up for air between finishing the book and embarking on a demanding book tour, and this is how he chose to spend it—saying thank you.

Though Brian gives many handmade gifts, he does not sell his artwork, or even part with it. Most of it is tucked safely in flat files in his studio. A few pieces hang on the walls of his mother's house. So it was especially touching when he gave me the jacket painting for *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins*, elegantly framed, for a wedding present. Every time I look at it, I feel Brian's love and friendship.

Brian's travels to promote *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* have taken him all over the United States and, several times, to Europe. I asked him how he was managing the busyness, and he confessed that he was having a little trouble keeping up with his e-mails. I suggested he hire someone to help him respond to the less personal ones. He paused and then said that he would have some difficulty weeding them out. If he were contacted by someone at a school he'd spoken at five years ago, for example, he couldn't imagine letting someone else answer on his behalf. For him, this was still a personal relationship.

When I look back at the extraordinary books Brian has created over his seventeen-year career and recall the many adventures we have had together, I am inspired by his work as an artist, delighted by his showmanship, and, most of all, honored to call him my friend.

INDEX

A

The Adventures of Spider (Arkhurst), 202, 206
Aesop's Fables, xxiv, 199, 202, 204, 206
Agee, Jon, *Milo's Hat Trick*, xiii
Aiken, Joan, xii
Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators, 173
Alice in Wonderland, 76
All Alone in the Universe (Perkins), 106
ALSC, *The Newbery and Caldecott Medal Books, 1986-2000*, ix, xv, xvi
The Amber Spyglass (Pullman), 26
An American Plague, xviii
And If the Moon Could Talk (Banks), 184
And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street (Seuss), 75
Are You in the House Alone? (Peck), 4
Arkhurst, Joyce Cooper, *The Adventures of Spider*, 202, 206
Armstrong, Jennifer, *King Crow* (illus. Rohmann), 63
Arnold of the Ducks (Gerstein), 79, 80
Arora, Shirley, *What Then, Raman?*, 25
Atlantic Monthly (magazine), 91
Avi
The Barn, 54
Crispin: The Cross of Lead, xvi, xix, 45–55

Encounter at Easton, 54
The Fighting Ground, 53
Nothing but the Truth: A Documentary Novel, 53
Poppy, 54
The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle, 53
“Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway?”, 54

B

Banks, Kate
Goodnight Moon, 184
And If the Moon Could Talk, 184
Banyai, Istvan, *Zoon*, 138
The Barn (Avi), 54
Bauer, Joan, 2
Because of Winn-Dixie (DiCamillo), xviii, 72
Bedtime for Frances, 183
The Bible, 80, 85
Bileck, Marvin, 104
Birney, Betty G., *The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs*, 137
Blume, Judy, 2
The Blushful Hippopotamus (Raschka), 124
Book of Genesis, 51
The Book Thief (Zusak), xii
The Books of Magic (Gaiman), 179

Borton de Treviño, Elizabeth, *I, Juan de Pareja*, 25

The Broken Cat (Perkins), 114

Brooks, Bruce, 94

Brown, Marcia, xxi, 40

Brown, Margaret Wise, 104

A Child's Good Night Book (illus. Charlot), 101

Two Little Trains (illus. Charlot), 101

Bud Not Buddy (Curtis), xvi

Bunting, Eve, *Night of the Gargoyles* (illus. Wiesner), 41

Burgoo Stew (Patron; illus. Shenon), 135

Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow (Sidman; illus. Kromme), 187, 189

Bynner, Witter, 76

Byrd, Robert, 147–161

Byrd, Robert, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* (Schlitz), xvii, xviii, xix, 147–161

C

Cadnum, Michael, 2

Can't Sleep (Raschka), 125

Carpenter, Frances

The Kite Fighters, 30, 31

Tales of a Korean Grandmother, 30

Carver, xviii

The Cat in the Hat (Seuss), 183, 185

Charlie Parker Played Be Bop (Raschka), 122, 125

Charlip, Remy, *Fortunately*, 163–164, 165

Charlot, Jean

A Child's Good Night Book (Brown), 101

Two Little Trains (Brown), 101

Charlotte's Web, 46, 72

Chattanooga Is Creek (Raschka), 125

Childcraft Encyclopedia, 110

A Child's Good Night Book (Brown; illus. Charlot), 101

Christie, Agatha, 122

Chuang Zhu, 89

The Cinder-Eyed Cats (Rohmann), 64

The City of Ember (Du Prau), xiii

Claudette Colvin, xviii

Clean Enough (Henkes), 103

Clouds for Dinner (Perkins), 113, 114

Collins, Suzanne, *The Hunger Games*, xii

Conrad, Pam, *Our House: The Stories of Levittown*, 165, 168, 170

Cooney, Barbara, 40

Coraline (Gaiman), 174, 179, 180, 181

Cormier, Robert, 3

Creech, Sharon, 2

Cricket (magazine), 39, 185, 187

Crispin: The Cross of Lead (Avi), xvi, xix, 44–55

Criss Cross (Perkins), xvi, xvii, xviii, 106–115

Crutcher, Chris, 2

The Cuckoo's Child (Freeman), 103

Curtis, Christopher Paul, *Bud Not Buddy*, xvi, xviii, 83

D

The Dangerous Alphabet (Gaiman), 179

Danziger, Paula, 2

Dark Cloud Strong Breeze (Patron), 135

de Treviño, Elizabeth Borton, *I, Juan de Pareja*, 25

DeFelice, Cynthia, 2

DiCamillo, Kate

Because of Winn-Dixie, 72

The Tale of Despereaux, xviii, xix, 66–73

The Tiger Rising, 72

Dickinson, Emily, 58

Dillon, Leo and Diane, 40

Dinesen, Isaac, 71

The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins (Kerley), 170, 171

A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century (Tuchman), 54

DiTerlizzi, Tony, 60

Dowell, Frances O'Roark, 94

Dresang, Eliza, *Radical Change*, xvi

Du Prau, Jeanne, *The City of Ember*, xiii

Duncan, Lois, 2

E

- Edison's Eye* (Wood), 164
 Eichenberg, Fritz, xxii
Encounter at Easton (Avi), 54
 Engle, Margarita, xviii
 Erdrich, Janet, *The Game of Silence*, xiii
Eulalie and the Hopping Head (Small), 14

F

- Fair Weather* (Peck), 4
*A Family of Readers: The Book Lover's
 Guide to Children's and Young Adult
 Literature* (Sutton and Parravano), x
 Farmer, Nancy, 46
 Faulkner, William, 58
Fenwick's Suit (Small), 21
The Fighting Ground (Avi), 53
*Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J.
 Harvey* (Kalman), xiii
First Light (Stead), 196, 197
Five for a Little One (Raschka), 125
The Floating World (Kadohata), 82, 92, 93, 94
Flotsam (Wiesner), xxiv
 Flournoy, Valerie, *The Patchwork Quilt* (illus.
 Pinkney), 206
 Forster, E.M., "What I Believe," 137
Fortunately (Charlip), 163–164, 165
 Fox, Paula, *How Many Miles to Babylon?*, 137
Frankenstein Moved In on the Fourth Floor
 (Levy; illus. Gerstein), 79
Freak the Mighty (Philbrick), xiii
Freddy the Detective, 104
 Freeman, Suzanne, *The Cuckoo's Child*, 103
Frog and the Stranger (Velthuijs), 183
Frog in Love (Velthuijs), 184
Frog in Winter (Velthuijs), 184
 Frost, A. B., 203
 A Fuse #8 Production blog, xvi, 130

G

- Gág, Wanda, xxii, 101, 185
 Gaiman, Neil
The Books of Magic, 179
Coraline, 174, 179, 180, 181
The Dangerous Alphabet, 179
Good Omens, 179
The Graveyard Book, xvii, xix, 172–181
Mr. Punch, 179
Odd and the Frost Giants, 181
The Sandman, 179
Signal to Noise, 179
Stardust, 179, 180
Violent Cases, 179
The Game of Silence (Erdrich), xiii
 Gantos, Jack, 2
 Garner, Neil, xii
George and Martha (Marshall), 183
 Gerstein, Mordicai, xxi
Arnold of the Ducks, 79, 80
*Frankenstein Moved In on the Fourth
 Floor* (Levy), 79
The Gigantic Baby, 80
*The Man Who Walked between the
 Towers*, xxiii
The Mountains of Tibet, 81
The Room, 80
The Shadow of a Flying Bird, 81
Tales of Pan, 80
 Victor, 80
What Charlie Heard, 80
The Wild Boy, 80
The Ghost Belonged to Me (Peck), 4
 Gide, André, 130
 Giff, Patricia Reilly, 2, 46
The Gigantic Baby (Gerstein), 80
Go, Dog. Go!, 110
The Golden Compass (Pullman), 62
*Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a
 Medieval Village* (Schiltz; illus. Byrd),
 xvii, xviii, xix, 147–161
Good Omens (Gaiman and Pratchett), 179
Goodnight, Goodnight (Rice), 184
Goodnight Moon (Banks), 184
Gossip Girls (Von Ziegesar), xii
Grandmother Winter (Root, illus. Krommes),
 187
The Graveyard Book (Gaiman; illus.
 McKean), xvii, xix, 172–181

Gray, Nicholas Stuart, 173
Green Eggs and Ham (Seuss), 166
The Green Glass Sea (Klages), xiii

H

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
 (Rowling), xii, xvi, xix, 6
 "Has the Newbery Lost Its Way?" (Silvey),
 xi, xvii
Hatchet (Park), 24, 46
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 58
Heavy Medal: A Mock Newbery Blog, x
The Hello, Goodbye Window (Juster; illus.
 Raschka), xxiv, 116–125
 Hemingway, Ernest, 58
 Henkes, Kevin, 83
Clean Enough, 103
Kitten's First Full Moon, xxii, 97–105
Margaret and Taylor, 103
Olive's Ocean, 104
Words of Stone, 103
 Hiaasen, Carl, 46
 Hicks, Edward, 203
The Hidden Folk (Lunge-Larson; illus.
 Kromme), 187
The Higher Power of Lucky (Patron; illus.
 Phelan), xvi, xix, 126–137, 126–144
 Hinton, S.E., 2
History of the Newbery and Caldecott Medals
 (Smith), 163
Hitler Youth, xviii
 Hoban, Russell, 71
 Hobbs, Will, 2
 Hogrogian, Nonny, 40
Holes, xi, xvi
 Holm, Jennifer, 132
Home Lovely (Perkins), 114
 The Horn Book, Inc., ix, x, xix
The Horn Book Magazine, ix, x, 6, 41, 132
The Houdini Box (Selznick), 168
The House in the Night (Swanson; illus.
 Krommes), xxii, 182–189
The House of the Scorpion, xix
How Many Miles to Babylon? (Fox), 137

Hugo (Selznick), 165
The Hunger Games (Collins), xii

I

I, Juan de Pareja (Borton de Treviño), 25
I Stink! (McMullan and McMullan), xiii
Imogene's Antlers (Small), 14, 21
The Invention of Hugo Cabret (Selznick), xix,
 xxii, 162–171

J

James and the Giant Peach, 194
Joey Pigza Loses Control, xix
 Johnson, Crockett, 104
Joyful Noise, xvii
The Jungle Book (Kipling), xvii, 177, 180
 Juster, Norton, *The Hello, Goodbye Window*
 (illus. Raschka), xxiv, 114, 116–125

K

Kadohata, Cynthia, xviii
The Floating World, 82, 92, 93, 94
Kira-Kira, 82–96
 Kalman, Maira, *Fireboat: The Heroic*
Adventures of the John J. Harvey, xiii
 Kelly, Jacqueline, xviii
 Kerley, Barbara, *The Dinosaurs of*
Waterhouse Hawkins, 170, 171
 Kerr, M. E., 2
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 85
King Crow (Armstrong; illus. Rohmann), 63
 Kipling, Rudyard, *The Jungle Book*, 177, 180
Kira-Kira (Kadohata), xvi, xvii, 82–96
Kirkus Reviews, x
The Kite Fighters (Carpenter), 30, 31
Kitten's First Full Moon (Henkes), xxii
 Klages, Ellen, *The Green Glass Sea*, xiii
 Konigsburg, Elaine, 94
Korea: A Walk through the Land of Miracles
 (Winchester), 24
 Krauss, Ruth, 104
 Krommes, Beth
Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the
Meadow (Sidman), 187, 189

- Grandmother Winter* (Root), 187
The Hidden Folk (Lunge-Larson), 187
The House in the Night, xxi, xxii, 182–189
The Lamp, the Ice, and the Boat Called Fish (Martin), 187
- L**
- The Lamp, the Ice, and the Boat Called Fish* (Martin; illus. Kromme), 187
- Lao Tzu, 76
- Larson, Kirby, 132
- “Last Night” (Machado), 71
- Law, Ingrid, xviii
- Lehman, Barbara, *The Red Book*, 138
- L’Engle, Madeleine, *A Wrinkle in Time*, xi, 175, 190, 191, 197
- Levertov, Denise, “The Secret,” 107
- Levy, Elizabeth, *Frankenstein Moved In on the Fourth Floor* (illus. Gerstein), 79
- Life* (magazine), 76
- Lin, Grace, xviii
- Lincoln: A Photobiography*, xvii
- Lincoln’s Knot* (Patron), 130
- Lindsay, Nina, xv–xx
Heavy Medal: A Mock Newbery Blog, x
Horn Book Magazine, x
Kirkus Reviews, x
School Library Journal, x
- The Lion and the Mouse* (Pinkney), xxiv, 199–208
- Little Fur Family*, 122, 183
- Little House on the Prairie*, 110
- Lively, Penelope, xii
- Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*, xviii
- Long, Joanna Rudge, x, xxi–xxv
- A Long Way from Chicago* (Peck), xii, xvi, 1, 3, 6, 9, 10
- Lord, Cynthia, xviii, 132
- Los Angeles Times*, 127
- Lowry, Lois, 2
- Lowry, Lois, *A Summer to Die*, 82
- Lunge-Larson, Lise, *The Hidden Folk* (illus. Kromme), 187
- Lyle, Lyle, *Crocodile*, 183
- M**
- Macaulay, David, 41
- Machado, Antonio, “Last Night,” 71
- Madeline, 183
- The Man Who Walked between the Towers* (Gerstein), xxiii, 74–81
- Margaret and Taylor* (Henkes), 103
- Marshall, James, 104
George and Martha, 183
The Stupids, 183
- Marshmallow (Newberry), 101
- Martin, Ann M., 46
- Martin, J. P., 173
- Martin, Jacqueline Briggs, *The Lamp, the Ice, and the Boat Called Fish* (illus. Kromme), 187
- Maybe Yes, Maybe No, Maybe Maybe* (Patron), 128, 130, 135, 136
- Mazer, Harry, *Twelve Shots: Outstanding Stories about Guns*, 3, 9
- McCarty, Peter, 60
- McCloskey, Robert, 40
- McKay, Hilary, 94
- McKean, Dave, *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman), 172–181
- McMullan, Jim and Kate, *I Stink!*, xiii
- Melville, Herman, 58
- Meyer, Stephanie, Twilight series, xii
- Millions of Cats*, 183
- Milo’s Hat Trick* (Agee), xiii
- Minty: A Story of a Young Harriet Tubman* (Schroeder; illus. Pinkney), 206
- Miss Rumphius*, 183
- Mittens* (Newberry), 101
- Moby Dick*, 164
- The Moffats, Gone-Away Lake*, 104
- The Most Beautiful Tree in the World* (Park), 32
- The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg*, xix
- The Mountains of Tibet* (Gerstein), 81
- Mr. Popper’s Penguins*, 104
- Mr. Punch* (Gaiman), 179
- Mukerji, Dhan Gopal, xviii

Munro, Alice, 71
My Friend Rabbit (Rohmann), xxiii, 56–65
 Myers, Walter Dean, 2, 46
Mysterious Thelonious (Raschka), 124

N

Nash, Ogden, 139
 Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds, 94
 Nelson, Marilyn, xviii
New York Is English (Raschka), 125
New York Times, xvi, 14, 15, 21, 131, 183, 192
New Yorker (magazine), 15, 21, 77, 91, 92, 174
 Newberry, Clare Turlay
 Marshmallow, 101
 Mittens, 101
 Pandora, 101
The Newbery and Caldecott Medal Books, 1986-2000: (ALSC, Horn), ix, xv
Night of the Gargoyles (Bunting; illus. Wiesner), 41
Northern Lights (Pullman), 62
Nothing but the Truth: A Documentary Novel (Avi), 53

O

Odd and the Frost Giants (Gaiman), 181
 Oliver, Mary, “The Summer Day,” 72
Olive’s Ocean (Henkes), 104
Our House: The Stories of Levittown (Conrad), 165, 168, 170
Owl Moon, 183

P

Pale Male: Citizen Hawk of New York City (Schulman), xiii
Pandora (Newberry), 101
Paris Review (magazine), 91
 Park, Linda Sue, xviii
 Hatchet, 24
 The Most Beautiful Tree in the World, 32
 Seesaw Girl, 23, 24, 29, 30, 31
 A Single Shard, xvi, xix, 22–33
 When My Name Was Keoko, 31, 32

Parravano, Martha V., *A Family of Readers: The Book Lover’s Guide to Children’s and Young Adult Literature*, x
The Patchwork Quilt (Flournoy; illus. Pinkney), 206
 Paterson, Katherine, 2, 94
 Patron, Susan
 Burgoo Stew (illus. Shenon), 135
 Dark Cloud Strong Breeze, 135
 The Higher Power of Lucky (illus. Phelan), xvi, xix, 126–137, 126–144
 Lincoln’s Knot, 130
 Maybe Yes, Maybe No, Maybe Maybe, 128, 130, 135, 136
 Peck, Richard
 Are You in the House Alone?, 4
 Fair Weather, 4
 The Ghost Belonged to Me, 4
 A Long Way from Chicago, xii, xvi, 1, 3, 6, 9, 10
 Remembering the Good Times, 4
 Representing Super Doll, 8
 A Year Down Yonder, xii, xvi, 3, 6, 7, 10
 Perkins, Lynne Rae
 All Alone in the Universe, 106, 114
 The Broken Cat, 114
 Clouds for Dinner, 113, 114
 Criss Cross, xvi, xvii, xviii, 106–115
 Home Lovely, 114
 Snow Music, 113, 114
 Petit, Philippe, *To Reach the Clouds*, 77
 Phelan, Matt, *The Higher Power of Lucky* (Patron), xvi, xix, 126–137, 126–144
 Philbrick, Rodman, *Freak the Mighty*, xiii
 Pinkney, Jerry, xxii, xxv, 60
 The Lion and the Mouse, xxiv, 199–208
 Minty: A Story of a Young Harriet Tubman (Schroeder), 206
 The Patchwork Quilt (Flournoy), 206
 The Talking Eggs (San Souci), 206
Playboy (magazine), 15
 Poe, Edgar Allen, 58
The Poky Little Puppy, 46
Poppy (Avi), 54

- Potter, Beatrix, 203
 Pratchett, Terry, *Good Omens*, 179
Princess Academy, xix
The Professor and the Madman (Winchester), 25
Publishers Weekly (magazine), 62, 131
 Pullman, Phillip, 191
The Amber Spyglass, 26
The Golden Compass, 62
Northern Lights, 62
- R**
- Rackham, Arthur, 203
Radical Change (Dresang), xvi
 Ransome, James, 208
 Raschka, Chris, xxi, xxii
The Blushful Hippopotamus, 124
Can't Sleep, 125
Charlie Parker Played Be Bop, 122, 125
Chattanooga Is Creek, 125
Five for a Little One, 125
The Hello, Goodbye Window (Juster), xxiv, 116–125
Mysterious Thelonious, 124
New York Is English, 125
Waffle, 125
Yo! Yes?, 124
- Rathmann, Peggy, 2
 Read Roger blog, xvi
The Red Book (Lehman), 138
Remembering the Good Times (Peck), 4
Representing Super Doll (Peck), 8
 Rive, Eve, *Goodnight, Goodnight*, 184
 Rohmann, Eric, xxi
The Cinder-Eyed Cats, 64
King Crow (Armstrong), 63
My Friend Rabbit, xxiii, 56–65
Steve Star—Good Guy of the Galaxy, 58
Time Flies, 60
The Room (Gerstein), 80
 Roosevelt Grady (Shotwell), 25
 Root, Phyllis, *Grandmother Winter* (illus. Krommes), 187
- Rowling, J.K., *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, xii, xvi, xix, 6
- S**
- Salisbury, Graham, 2
 San Souci, Robert D., *The Talking Eggs* (illus. Pinkney), 206
The Sandman (Gaiman), 179
 Saunders, George, 71
Savvy, xix
 Schlitz, Laura Amy, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*, xvii, xviii, xix, 147–161
School Library Journal, xvii
 Schroeder, Alan, *Minty: A Story of a Young Harriet Tubman* (illus. Pinkney), 206
 Schulman, Janet, *Pale Male: Citizen Hawk of New York City*, xiii
Scientific American, 85
The Sea Cook (Stevenson), 51
 Sector 7 (Wiesner), 41, 42
Seesaw Girl (Park), 23, 24, 29, 30, 31
 Selznick, Brian, xxii, xxiii
The Houdini Box, 168
The Invention of Hugo Cabret, xix, xxii, 162–171
 Sendak, Maurice, *Where the Wild Things Are*, 164, 165
 Seuss, 113
The Cat in the Hat, 183, 185
Green Eggs and Ham, 166
And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, 75
The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs (Birney), 137
The Shadow of a Flying Bird (Gerstein), 81
 Shannon, Mike, *Burgoo Stew* (Patron), 135
 Shotwell, Louisa, *Roosevelt Grady*, 25
Show Way, xviii
 Sidman, Joyce, *Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow* (illus. Kromme), 187, 189
Signal to Noise (Gaiman), 179

- Silvey, Anita, "Has the Newbery Lost Its Way?", xi, xvii
- A Single Shard* (Park), xvi, xix, 22–33
- Small, David, xxi, xxiii, 12
- Eulalie and the Hopping Head*, 14
- Fenwick's Suit*, 21
- Imogene's Antlers*, 14, 21
- So You Want to Be President?* (St. George), xxiii, 12–21
- Smith, Irene, *History of the Newbery and Caldecott Medals*, 163
- Snow Music* (Perkins), 113, 114
- So You Want to Be President* (St. George; illus. Small), xxiii, 12–21
- Sones, Sonya, 2
- Spinelli, Jerry, 2
- St. George, Judith, *So You Want to Be President* (illus. Small), xxiii, 12–21
- Stardust* (Gaiman), 179, 180
- Stead, Rebecca
- First Light*, 196, 197
- When You Reach Me*, 190–198
- Steve Star—Good Guy of the Galaxy* (Rohmann), 58
- Stevens, Wallace, 76
- Stevenson, Robert Louis
- The Sea Cook*, 51
- Treasure Island*, 51
- Storey, Margaret, 173
- The Story of Ferdinand*, 46
- The Stupids* (Marshall), 183
- A Summer to Die* (Lowry), 82
- The Surrender Tree*, xviii
- Sutton, Roger, xi–xiii, 132
- A Family of Readers: The Book Lover's Guide to Children's and Young Adult Literature*, x
- The Horn Book, Inc., x
- Swanson, Susan Marie, *The House in the Night*, xxii, 182–189
- T**
- Talbert, Marc, 2
- The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo), xviii, xix, 66–73
- Tales of a Korean Grandmother* (Carpenter), 30
- Tales of Pan* (Gerstein), 80
- The Talking Eggs* (San Souci; illus. Pinkney), 206
- "The Secret" (Levertov), 107
- "The Summer Day" (Oliver), 72
- Thomas, Dylan, *Under Milk Wood*, 108
- The Three Pigs* (Wiesner), xxiv, 34–44, 141, 142, 144, 145
- The Tiger Rising* (DiCamillo), 72
- Time Flies* (Rohmann), 60
- To Reach the Clouds* (Petit), 77
- Tolan, Stephanie S., 46
- Treasure Island* (Stevenson), 51
- The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (Avi), 53
- Tuchman, Barbara W., *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century*, 54
- Tuck Everlasting*, 46
- Tuesday: June 29, 1999* (Wiesner), 41, 42, 142
- TV Guide* (magazine), 110
- Twain, Mark, 4, 58
- Twelve Shots: Outstanding Stories about Guns* (Mazer), 3, 9
- The Twenty-one Balloons.*, 104
- Twilight series (Meyer), xii
- Two Little Trains* (Brown; illus. Charlot), 101
- U**
- Under Milk Wood* (Thomas), 108
- The Underneath*, xix
- V**
- Van Allsburg, Chris, 40
- Velthuijs, Max
- Frog and the Stranger*, 183
- Frog in Love*, 184
- Frog in Winter*, 184
- Victor (Gerstein), 80
- Violent Cases* (Gaiman), 179
- The Voice That Challenged a Nation*, xviii
- Von Ziegesar, Cecily, Gossip Girls series, xii
- Vonnegut, Kurt, 111

W

- Waffle* (Raschka), 125
Wall Street Journal, 21
Washington Post, 15
The Wednesday Wars, xix
What Charlie Heard (Gerstein), 80
 “What I Believe” (Forster), 137
What Then, Raman? (Arora), 25
When My Name Was Keoko (Park), 31, 32
When You Reach Me (Stead), xvii, xix, 190–198
Where the Mountain Meets the Moon, xviii, xix
Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak), 165
 “Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway?” (Avi), 54
 Wiesner, David, xxi
 Flotsam, xxiv, 138–146
 Sector 7, 41, 42
 The Three Pigs, xxiv, 34–44, 141, 142, 144, 145
 Tuesday: June 29, 1999, 41, 42, 142

- The Wild Boy* (Gerstein), 80
 Wilder, Laura Ingalls, 30, 131
 Winchester, Simon
 Korea: A Walk through the Land of Miracles, 24
 The Professor and the Madman, 25
 Wolff, Tobias, 91
 Wood, Gaby, *Edison’s Eve*, 164
 Woodson, Jacqueline, xviii, 2
Words of Stone (Henkes), 103
A Wrinkle in Time (L’Engle), xi, 175, 190, 191, 197

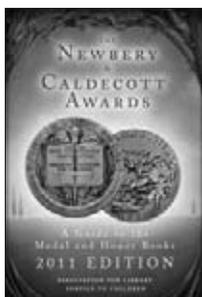
Y

- A Year Down Yonder* (Peck), xii, xvi, 3, 6, 7, 10
 Yep, Laurence, xviii
Yo! Yes? (Raschka), 124

Z

- Zindel, Paul, 2
Zoom (Banyai), 138
 Zusak, Marcus, *The Book Thief*, xii

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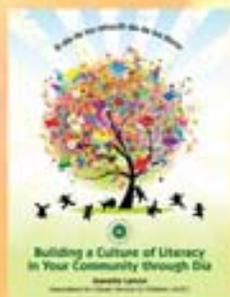
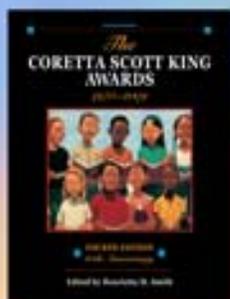
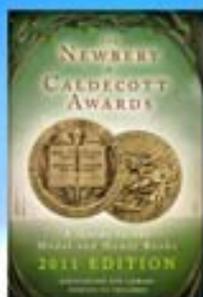
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