

Medal Deserving Stories



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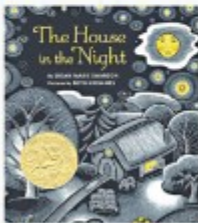


by Linda Conroy of Centralia Timberland Library

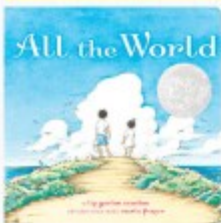
I had an opportunity to give a presentation on picture books to a Centralia College class a few months ago. As I prepared, I looked at Caldecott Medal winners from the last 10 years. The American Library Association (ALA) awards a medal and designates honor books each year for excellence in illustration. The award is named after groundbreaking illustrator Ralph Caldecott (1846–1886). For more information on the Caldecott Medal, including criteria and a complete list of winners, visit www.ALA.org and type Caldecott into the search box.

It's no surprise that a youth services librarian loves both children and picture books! But in busy, everyday life, it's easy to fall into autopilot mode and forget to appreciate things. Working on the presentation reminded me how absolutely wonderful children's books are. I want to share that renewed sense of wonder about picture books with you.

Here are 10 of my favorite Caldecott medalists since 2007, listed from oldest to newest. I hope these short descriptions encourage you to examine these books more closely.



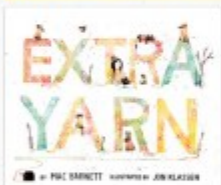
The House in the Night by Susan Marie Swanson, illustrated by Beth Krommes. (2009 Caldecott Medal winner.) The book's gentle and repetitive text is reminiscent of *Good Night Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, but the similarities end there. Instead of the bright primary colors found in *Good Night Moon*, *The House in the Night* has black and white scratch board illustrations with a few spots of bright yellow watercolor. What amazes me is how many tiny strokes the illustrator used to make each object in the picture and how the small spots of color add such warmth and comfort.



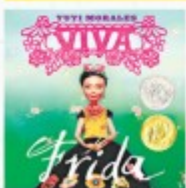
All the World by Liz Garton Scanlon, illustrated by Marla Frazee. (2010 Caldecott Honor book.) This lovely poem describes attributes of a beach, tree, garden, music and even human beings. It also shows how the world encompasses everything around us. Frazee's pencil and watercolor drawings have a soft palette which contrast nicely with repeated horizontal and vertical lines or strong swirls and curves. The pictures have a lot of movement, both because of the lines and the placement of objects. This book is the visual equivalent of curling up in a favorite chair – cozy and comforting.



The Lion and the Mouse retold and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. (2010 Caldecott Medal winner.) This familiar Aesop's fable of natural enemies helping each other has been re-imagined as a wordless book. Pinkney's use of pencil, watercolor and colored pencils gives him a wide range of hues – from soft yellow for sunshine to dark brown for the lion's mane. The brushstrokes provide texture while the pencil lines add details. This book is, quite simply, a visual feast.



Extra Yarn by Mac Barnett, illustrated by Jon Klassen. (2013 Caldecott Honor book.) This is a charming story about the power of caring and the price of happiness. Anabelle, the main character, knits for people – herself, her dog and her classmates – and somehow, she always has extra yarn left over. When Anabelle runs out of people and animals to give sweaters to, she knits coverings for houses and cars. The cumulative effect of these knitting acts of kindness changes the town in positive ways. The illustrations start out as drab shades of brown, but all of the sweaters are shown in a beautiful range of subdued colors. And what's more, the sweaters are drawn to look like stockinette stitch, so they appear to be hand-knit.



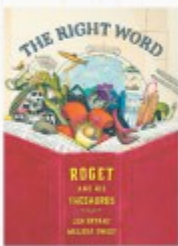
Viva Frida written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales. (2015 Caldecott Honor book.) Morales uses dolls, felted characters and diorama elements to create vignettes to accompany the few phrases ("I play", "I see") in the book. When Frida dreams, the photographs change to hand drawn images in a softer palette, perfectly capturing the dream state.



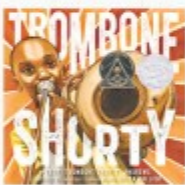
Sleep Like a Tiger by Mary Logue, illustrated by Pamela Zagarenski. (2013 Caldecott Honor book.) In the time-honored tradition of avoiding bedtime, a little girl asks if everything sleeps. Each animal she mentions does indeed sleep, even if it is in a different way than humans do. Zagarenski used wood as the base for mixed media, which lends a lot of texture to the whimsical illustrations. Several objects recur multiple times throughout the book. For instance, a toy whale grows massive and swims in the ocean; a golden ball serves as the sun, a balloon and part of a toy; and a tea pot is seen in the kitchen, in the back of a toy pickup truck and on a train. Pre-readers will love this visual "I spy." The style of the pictures complement the quieting and slowing down that is the precursor to sleep.



Flora and the Flamingo written and illustrated by Molly Idle. (2014 Caldecott Honor book.) Flora, a little girl in a pink bathing suit and black flippers, dances with a flamingo. Many of the pages have flaps to lift, showing even more dance moves. The illustrations feature generous use of white space, simple lines and lots of shades of pink. Everyone will want to dance – or at least copy someone else's gestures – after reading this book.



The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus by Jen Bryan, illustrated by Melissa Sweet. (2015 Caldecott Honor book.) Peter Roget loved classifying objects and making lists. The lists covered a wide range of subjects: weather, plants and eventually words. The artist hand-lettered lists of words and incorporated printed words and subject numbers into the illustrations. Alphabet letters, beautifully lettered quotes and found objects like book bindings are also used. It's the visual equivalent of an eccentric, antiquarian bookstore that almost promises treasures – if you look carefully enough.



Trombone Shorty by Troy Andrews, illustrated by Bryan Collier. (2016 Caldecott Honor book.) Collier deftly uses light and shade, but it's his addition of shapes – spirals of sounds, rays of music and collage elements – that makes his pictures stand out. It all works together to beautifully express the energy of playing music and the excitement of hearing it.



Finding Winnie: The True Story of the World's Most Famous Bear by Lindsay Mattick, illustrated by Sophie Blackall. (2016 Caldecott Medal winner.) The bear in the title inspired Christopher Robin to name his teddy bear Winnie, the inspiration for A.A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh books. The story-within-a-story (a child is being told this story about one of his relatives) and illustrations that are realistic with soft edges, are a winning combination. The book ends with historical photos of the same events being relayed in the book.

These books are a minuscule portion of the many amazing picture books in the library. Want more? Take a look at the Caldecott Medal list and develop your own list of favorites. Or simply browse the picture book shelves, being open to a new discovery.

Of course, at the library your friendly library staff is always ready to suggest more titles. Library books are available in many formats: traditional books, audio books (both down-loadable and on CD) and eBooks. You'll also find DVDs, music CDs, and magazines for both you and your children.

Don't forget that your local library offers story times and other free events for all ages. And it's not too late to get started with the summer reading program! Check the library events calendar at www.TRL.org to find out what's happening near you. See you soon at the library!

Linda Conroy is a youth services librarian at Centralia Timberland Library. Not surprisingly, she loves to read and to share books with children of all ages! She is a mom to a big dog and enjoys spending time with her nieces and nephews.



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