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Newbery Award Winners, 1948-1973

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NEWBERY AWARD WINNERS,
1948-1973

A Paper Presented
to Mrs. Dorothy Chapel
in Fulfillment of
Special Studies in Children's Literature,
Spring, 1973

by
Pamela Jean Estes

This paper represents the continuation of work done in the fall semester of 1972. The intent has been to focus on reading the Nobel award winners from 1948-1973, and to analyze and compare them.

The 1948 award went to William Pené DuBois's Twenty-one Balloons. This book is an unusual winner; the main character professes to greatly dislike children. Yet the 66-year-old man copes with them nicely in his encounter with the hidden civilization. A delightful story with amusement and meaning in the imaginative circumstances and characters. The American ingenuity sometimes called "Yankee" is emphasized. The story goes around the world in 40 days. Almost two-thirds of the book is in first person, but there are third person interludes and narratives, too.

In 1949, the committee chose King of the Wind by Marguerite Henry. It is a beautiful, touching horse story. But more than merely the chronicle of the ancestry of Man O'War it is the story of a boy becoming a man. Mute Agba remains faithful to his commission throughout terrible and good times. Historically documented fiction, it emphasizes loyalty, devotion and beauty.

Marguerite de Angeli's The Door in the Wall won the 1950 award. Her tale is one of courage, wisdom and wit as well as compassion and cooperation. It is similar to The Trumpeter of Krakow (1929) in that the boy saves everyone and also to Adam of the Road (1943) in that the songs and spirit of the middle ages are emphasized. Its uniqueness lies in the truths that a child is accepted by finding his own door and that crippled does not mean useless nor unloved.

The 1951 award went to the biography of a black man who not only earned his own freedom but also that of several others. Amos Fortune, Free Man is the simply told story of universal truth: Man is free if he desires to be. It is also interesting in the statement for charity. Its high view of the value of life and work are definitely American.

Ginger Pye by Eleanor Estes, which won in 1952, is a part of a collection of stories about the Pye family escapades. The characters are simple and yet very interesting. The writing connects former incidents with the present well. The story centers on the dog, but the continual mention of other children's books and the events for earning make it a story about children maturing.

Ann Nolan Clark's The Secret of the Andes received the award in 1953. In the tradition of tribal heritage and national unity, this story also tells of the dignity of priesthood, old ways and the continuing search for knowledge. Chuto teaches Cusi what his background of knowledge can, but Cusi finds that the secret to all of life is in the heart.

The story of a young boy yearning to be important in family affairs won the 1954 award for Joseph Krungold. And Now Miguel is a story of maturation.

The important truths Miguel learns is that wishes do not turn out the way we think they will, that being needed means losing someone else, and yet that there is hope that everything will turn out alright. The plot is strong and the dialogue with Gabriel is excellent.

In 1955 The Wheel on the Schoolhouse by Meindert DeJong won the coveted award. Set in coastal Holland, this book tells the adventures of children who discover with the guidance of a good teacher that they can make things happen. In doing they each learn about themselves and each other. There is a balance of characters so that no one is more integral to the story than another. The emphasis is on thinking and then acting, with a special thrust of stick-to-it-iveness. Teamwork is also important-adults and children must work together.

Another biographical work won the award in 1956. Carry On, Mr. Bowditch is an easy reading story that moves along with excitement from mental and physical activity. Not at all stuffy as so many children's biographies are, Jean Lee Latham has written a factual story without boring statistical details.

The Miracles on Maple Hill by Virginia Sorenson, though a winner in 1957, still has special significance today. Reflecting the POW-returned-home situation of the Korean conflict, the story strikes a balance between romantic optimism and hard reality. The family is especially realistic- there are squabbles, arguments and solid loving understanding.

In 1958, Harold Keith won with his historical fiction, Rifles for Watie. Excellent characterizations and an action packed plot make this Civil War tale a good one. But it is unique in its western setting and inclusion of the Indians. Its concession to happy endings does not keep it from being most realistic.

Elizabeth G. Speare earned her first Newbery in 1959 with the moving story, The Witch of Blackbird Pond. The plot is based on inter and intra-character conflicts. An excellent exposal of prejudice and false patriotism. The characters are developed well and act within their personalities.

The 1960 award went to a book that "deals with a classic theme... of the age-old conflict between father and son." Onion John by Joseph Krungold is not only the story of the person of that name but also about Andy and the town they both are a part of. The story shows how helpful interference for the 'poor' is damaging all around.

Scott O'Dell based The Island of the Blue Dolphins on factual records. The 1961 story is told in a descriptive easy style. The emphasis of Karana's life on the island is self-reliance and courage. The girl's love of nature is well told.

Bronze Bow, another historically based book by Elizabeth G. Speare, received the award in 1962. Set in Galilee at the time of Christ, the story is action filled. Yet the overall truth in the book is even more touching. The exquisite dialogue on page 222 and following is one of the truest explanations of the teachings of Jesus. In this story the author repeats her success with characterization and plot.

For the first time a science fiction story won the award in 1963. A Wrinkle in Time by Madeline L'Engle is set in the present and in Anytown, U.S.A., but the imaginative nature of the story defines it as science fiction. The plot itself is American; a young girl refuses to believe her father is gone. The twist ending places importance on love. The writing itself is of course good but an especially strong piece of dialogue is the conversation with the strange Mrs. Who, Whatsit, and Which.

In 1964 the Newbery went to Emily Chehey Neville for It's Like This Cat. Set in New York, with a strong plot of several maturing processes, this story is realistic and profound. The incidents do not seem contrived. The characters are well rounded and believable. The revelations on social behavior and inter-relating emotions is excellent for a book of its difficulty.

Shadow of a Bull by Maia Wojciechowska received the 1965 award. Shadow is a factual almost psychological story of a boy's struggle against preconceived ideas of his future. The development of this problem is done in such a way that the story is exciting and fairly suspenseful. The ending is believable also.

Elizabeth B. de Treviño based her story, I, Juan de Pareja, on historical records from the lifetime of Velezquez. It won the 1966 Newbery deservedly. Another story about a black man who earns his freedom, it is unique in its approach to Art and Truth. It is a book of beauty and religious faith, well-written and realistic.

Another identity crisis story was awarded the prize in 1967. Irene Hunt's Up a Road Slowly tells in non-sentimental language the struggle of a girl and her family to become themselves. Characterizations were thorough; conflicts were well developed and solved.

One of my personal favorites, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil F. Frankweiler by E.L. Konigsburg was the 1968 recipient. A fascinating plot, strong characters, and an interesting format make this story one of the best of the best. The third person omniscient point of view is exactly right for the book. Mrs. Konigsburg was her own runnerup in 1968. This was a first. Her other book is entitled Jennifer, Hecate, McKinley, Macbeth & me, Elizabeth.

The final book is a collection of stories set in the mythical Welsh land of Prydain won the 1969 award for Lloyd Alexander. The High King concludes the story of Taran, Princess Eilonwy, Gurgi, Fflewddur Fflam and Deli. Although I am not familiar with any of the other stories (The Black Cauldron was runner-up for the 1966 award) I think this one can be read well without knowledge of the others even though there are references to former incidents. This story had as a major emphasis knowledge of self and loyalty to good.

Based on a true story told to the author in his childhood, Sounder won the 1970 Newbery. William H. Armstrong writes in a simple style that belies the depth of the book. Though the story is simple and the characterizations not rounded, the book transcends children's literature, easily classifying as a classic for all ages.

Summer of the Swans by Betsy Byars received the 1971 award. The story traces Sara's growing up within the search for her retarded brother. An excellent story of self acceptance and realization. The book is natural and honest.

Robert C. O'Brien won in 1972 with his story of cooperation, Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH. This story is unique in its animal viewpoints. The mouse who aids the rats who aid her is looked upon by other mice as very brave, but she knows that hopping one another must be a way of life. The mixture of third and first person to tell the stories of past and present is also very good.

This February a book in the tradition of Island of the Blue Dolphins (the 1961 winner) received the award for outstanding work in children's literature. Julie of the Wolves by Jean Craighead George is a touching story concerning a girl caught between not only a changing society but also in the grips of maturing to womanhood. It is one of the most realistic of all of the Newbery books. Perhaps it will not be appreciated by many but children who read it will understand the girl with two names and her struggle for survival. The book utilizes long flashbacks as well as the more common linear story line.

As the table shows, the stories are set in many different locales. The setting for most of the books (18) is the United States area. This figure includes books with specific American settings and those with a general American setting. Europe is next with six books set in most or all of the European countries. South America and Galilee have one book each.

The duration of the stories varies from the extremely short one day of A Wrinkle in Time to the long (90 years) of Amos Fortune and Carry on Mr. Bowditch.

Although almost twice as many women received the award than men, more stories

are written about boys than girls. Most of the stories are written in third person. Just as in the years 1922-1947, the books of the years 1948-1973 exhibit no definite trends except a continuing move toward American settings. The only new aspect is the increasing psychological nature of many of the books. These books are truly worthy and lasting contributions to children's literature.

<u>Person</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Locale</u>	<u>Approx. Duration</u>	<u>Sex of Main Characters</u>	<u>Sex of Author</u>
3rd	1948	U.S., Dutch W. Indies	40 yrs.	male	male
3rd	1949	Morocco, France & England	29 yrs.	horse/boy	female
3rd	1950	England	3 mos.	male	female
3rd	1951	New England	90 yrs.	male	female
3rd	1952	New England	3 mos.	male/female	female
3rd	1953	Peru	6 mos.	male	female
1st	1954	New Mexico	1 yr.	male	male
3rd	1955	Holland	3 mos.	female/male	male
3rd	1956	Massachusetts	80 yrs.	male	female
3rd	1957	Pennsylvania	1 yr.	female	female
3rd	1958	Kan., Okla., Texas, Ark.	4 yrs.	male	male
3rd	1959	Connecticut	1 yr.	female	female
1st	1960	U.S.-town	1 yr.	male	male
1st	1961	island off Calif.	18 yrs.	female	male
3rd	1962	Galilee	1 yr.	male/female	female
3rd	1963	U.S.-town	one day	female	female
1st	1964	New York City	1 yr.	male	female
3rd	1965	Spain	3 yrs.	male	female
1st	1966	Spain	60 yrs.	male	female
1st	1967	U.S.	11 yrs.	female	female
3rd	1968	NY City suburbs	1 week	female/male	female
3rd	1969	Prydain	less than 1 yr.	male/female	male
3rd	1970	South U.S.	7 yrs.	male	male
3rd	1971	U.S.A.	few days	female	female
3rd/1st	1972	U.S.A.	2 wks/8 yrs.	female/male rats	male
3rd	1973	Alaska	1 yr.	female	female