



## *Illuminating Texts*

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### **A Personal Overview of Caldecott Medal Winners 1968-1998**

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Each year at the annual midwinter meeting of the [American Library Association](#) which occurs in January, there is an early morning press conference during which the award-winning children's books and videos are announced. The media, publishers, youth services librarians, library school faculty members and other librarians from across the country breathlessly await the announcement of the "most distinguished American Picture Book for children published in the United States during the preceding year."

My introduction to the Caldecott Medal came by way of an elementary school teacher who told us about the importance of the medal and about the gold seal on the cover of the award-winning books. As a young child, I looked for those picture books with the gold seal at my public library knowing that those books were special. Whether it was a book about Madeline, a family of ducklings, a house, or Cinderella, I always knew that those books really meant something.

I became a Children's Librarian in 1968 and have worked in youth services for thirty years in Los Angeles; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and currently as the Children and Youth Services Consultant at the California State Library in Sacramento. I have had the honour of serving on the 1995 Caldecott Committee which chose *Smoky Night*, and learned first hand what is involved in selecting the award-winning book. That experience caused me to reflect on previous award winners and wonder what trends have occurred during my thirty year career.

In the late 1960's, societal concerns had an impact on what was being published; as a result, there was an influx of multicultural books. However, the quality of many of those early picture books was not very high. The impact on the Caldecott was not apparent until 1971 when winner *A Story--A Story*, an African Folktale (Haley) began a tradition of honouring multicultural books. Seven other winners followed: *Arrow to the Sun*, a Native American Folktale (McDermott) in 1975; *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, an African Folktale (the Dillons) in 1976; *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions* (the Dillons) in 1977; *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*, a Native American Folktale (Goble) in 1979; *Shadow*, an African Tale (Brown) in 1983; *Grandfather's Journey*, a Japanese immigrant story (Say) in 1994; *Smoky Night*, which described the civil unrest in Los Angeles (Diaz) in 1995. Twenty-seven percent of the winning books during this thirty year period were multicultural.

Folktales were by far the most popular genre, with twelve winners making up 40% of the total books representing ethnicities/cultures such as African, Chinese, German, Japanese, Jewish, Native American, Russian.

Eleven of the winners (37%) depicted children/families, with two books representing an intergenerational theme. There were no books featuring non-traditional families.

Fantasy/Realism was the genre for five of the winning books (17%) in the 1980's and 1990's: *The Polar Express* and *Jumanji* (Van Allsburg); *Hey, Al* (Egielski); *Black and White* (Macaulay); and *Tuesday* (Wiesner).

Non-fiction did not figure prominently during this period -- there were only three (10%) titles: *The Glorious Flight* (the Provencens), a biography, in 1984; *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions* (the Dillons) in 1977; and *Noah's Ark* (Spier) in 1978.

Many picture books are created by an author who also does the illustrations. During this period, there were sixteen such titles (53%) with most of them appearing in the 1970's and the 1990's. Fourteen



titles (47%) had different authors and illustrators, predominantly in the 1980's, with an almost equal number in other years.

Winning just one Caldecott Medal is a great honour; imagine winning two! Chris Van Allsburg (1982, 1986) and Leo and Diane Dillon (1976, 1977) were double winners, the Dillons being the only illustrators to win awards in two consecutive years. Two illustrators won one award during and before this period -- Nonny Hogrogian (1966, 1972) and Barbara Cooney (1959, 1980). Only one illustrator has been the recipient of three Caldecott Medals -- Marcia Brown (1955, 1962, 1983).

What does all of this mean and what, if any, impact have societal trends had on award-winning picture books during the last thirty years? The most significant impact is the acknowledgement, finally, that multicultural society should be reflected in award-winning books. The sharing of folktales from different cultures has also been validated. As a result of this cultural exchange, we can begin to recognize the commonalities that exist in our world, as we embark on a new millennium.

### Caldecott Medal Books 1968 --1998

DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
1968	<i>Drummer Hoff</i>	Emberley	Simon & Schuster
1969	<i>The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship</i>	Shulevitz	Farrar
1970	<i>Sylvester and the Magic Pebble</i>	Steig	Windmill Simon & Schuster
1971	<i>A Story--A Story</i>	Haley	Atheneum
1972	<i>One Fine Day</i>	Hogrogian	Simon & Schuster
1973	<i>The Funny Little Woman</i>	Lent	Dutton
1974	<i>Duffy and the Devil</i>	Zemach	Farrar
1975	<i>Arrow to the Sun</i>	McDermott	Viking
1976	<i>Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears</i>	the Dillons	Dial
1977	<i>Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions</i>	the Dillons	Dial
1978	<i>Noah's Ark</i>	Spier	Doubleday
1979	<i>The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses</i>	Goble	Bradbury
1980	<i>Ox-Cart Man</i>	Cooney	Viking
1981	<i>Fables</i>	Lobel	Harper
1982	<i>Jumanji</i>	Van Allsburg	Houghton Mifflin
1983	<i>Shadow</i>	Brown	Scribner
1984	<i>The Glorious Flight</i>	the Provensens	Viking
1985	<i>Saint George and the Dragon</i>	Hyman	Little Brown
1986	<i>The Polar Express</i>	Van Allsburg	Houghton Mifflin
1987	<i>Hey, Al</i>	Egielski	Farrar
1988	<i>Owl Moon</i>	Schoenherr	Philomel
1989	<i>Song and Dance Man</i>	Gammell	Knopf
1990	<i>Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China</i>	Young	Philomel
1991	<i>Black and White</i>	Macaulay	Houghton Mifflin
1992	<i>Tuesday</i>	Wiesner	Clarion
1993	<i>Mirette on the High Wire</i>	McCully	Putnam
1994	<i>Grandfather's Journey</i>	Say	Houghton Mifflin
1995	<i>Smoky Night</i>	Diaz	Harcourt
1996	<i>Officer Buckle and Gloria</i>	Rathmann	Putnam



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DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
1997	<i>Golem</i>	Wisniewski	Clarion
1998	<i>Rapunzel</i>	Zelinsky	Dutton

For the complete list of winners, and information about the award, visit the [Caldecott Medal Home Page](#)

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