Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award and the Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Award

Sponsored by:
The de Grummond Children's Literature Collection
and The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation

Background

The Ezra Jack Keats (EJK) New Writer Award was conceived in 1983 by Hannah Nuba, Director of ECRIC, The New York Public Library's Early Childhood Resource and Information Center, and proposed to Dr. Lillie Pope and Dr. Martin Pope, Directors of the EJK Foundation. Drs. Martin and Lillie Pope approved the concept and agreed to support the award. Dr. Bernice Cullinan was enlisted to assist in developing the award. In 2001, a parallel award for illustration was instituted. Both are now annual awards. In 2011, the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection (de Grummond) at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) became co-sponsor of the awards. The EJK Foundation is responsible for financial support and advisory counsel, and de Grummond is responsible for the administration of the award.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee members include one member from the EJK Foundation; two members from USM (ex-officio), the Curator of de Grummond and the Dean of University Libraries; and the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson of the Award Selection Committee.

The de Grummond Collection will administer the Awards. The Curator of de Grummond will serve as an ex officio member of the Executive Committee, the Award Selection Committee (the Jury), and work as a liaison to the EJK Foundation.

The EJK New Writer and New Illustrator Award Selection Committee (the Jury)

The EJK Jury shall be composed of nine people, one of whom will serve as Chair and one of whom will serve as Vice-Chair, selected to represent fields such as illustrators, authors, librarians, early childhood educators, book reviewers, literary critics, and members of such professional organizations as IRA, NCTE, ALA, NAEYC, and the Children's Book Council. An ex-officio member will attend the Jury meeting, and vote if there is a tie.

Jury members will serve a three-year term. Members can be reappointed by the Executive Committee to a second term (for a maximum of six consecutive years). Once off the committee for an interval of time, an individual can be invited to serve on the committee again. Three-year terms will be rotated to maintain a

balanced and experienced committee.

Names of prospective jurors to fill vacancies will be submitted to the Executive Committee by the Chairperson at an interval prior to the annual awards ceremony; this will allow time for discussion and approval by the Executive Committee, the extension of invitations and the receipt of acceptances. The Committee Chairperson will invite new members to join the Jury, following approval by the Executive Committee. New Jury members can then be introduced at the award ceremony and exiting members thanked for their service.

The Chairperson will serve a two-year term. The Executive Committee will also name a Vice-Chair from committee members to assist the Chairperson prior to assuming the duties of Chair.

Publicity

The Office of University Communications of USM will publicize the EJK/de Grummond New Writer and New Illustrator Awards by preparing and disseminating press releases, notifying media of presentation events, and communicating through appropriate news channels. The de Grummond Collection will promote the awards by linking its website to the EJK website. The EJK website contains an EJK/de Grummond New Writer Award Page and an EJK/de Grummond New Illustrator Award Page and will also include procedures and guidelines for submission of books to be considered for the Awards. The de Grummond Collection will further promote the awards through highlights and banners on its website as appropriate.

Announcements about the winning author, illustrator, and books will be sent to children's book publications and professional journals such as School Library Journal, Horn Book, Booklist, The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, Publisher's Weekly, the IRA Reading Teacher, the AFT's American Teacher, the NY Times, and other local and national press and appropriate listservs. The EJK Jury Chair and the Curator of de Grummond will maintain a current publisher list for effective publicity and for award submissions.

Guidelines and Criteria for the New Writer Award

The EJK New Writer Award is given to a new writer for a picture book written in the tradition of EJK that:

- Highlights the universal qualities of childhood and the strength of the family.
- Reflects the multicultural nature of our world.
- Has an original text and original story (no folk tales or retelling of folk tales).
- Unifies illustrations and text.
- Avoids stereotypes.
- Is respectful of the child's intelligence, sensitivity, curiosity and love of learning.
- Displays freshness and originality of language and literary expression.

This award is given for distinguished writing and text, not for illustration.

The intent of the New Writer Award is to identify and encourage early talent. To be eligible **the author will have no more than three children's picture books published prior to the year under consideration**.

Books that have not already received awards will be given preference.

No books by committee members or their immediate families will be considered. Any other involvement with books under consideration must be brought, by the involved committee member, to the Chair's attention before the nominating process begins. The Executive Committee will determine whether that committee member should recuse him/herself from discussion of the book(s) in question. If necessary, a USM proxy will vote in place of the recused committee member for that Award.

Guidelines and Criteria for New Illustrator Award

This award is given for distinguished artwork that creatively and skillfully embodies the essence of the story or text. The award is given for illustration of a picture book that is rendered in the tradition of Ezra Jack Keats that:

- Highlights the universal qualities of childhood and the strength of the family
- Reflects the multicultural nature of our world
- Unifies illustrations and text (if present)
- Avoids stereotypes
- Is respectful of the child's intelligence, sensitivity, curiosity and love of learning

The illustrations should:

Demonstrate excellent command of the chosen medium
Display freshness and originality in style and/or form of artistic expression

The intent of the New Illustrator Award is to identify and encourage early talent. **To be eligible the illustrator will have no more than three children's picture books published prior to the year under consideration**.

Books that have not already received awards will be given preference.

No books by committee members or their immediate families will be considered. Any other involvement with books under consideration must be brought, by the involved committee member, to the Chair's attention before the nominating process begins. The Executive Committee will determine whether that committee member should recuse him/herself from discussion of the book(s) in question. If necessary, a USM proxy will vote in place of the recused committee member for that Award.

Procedures for Award Selection

- The Curator of the de Grummond will invite publishers to submit books to be considered for both of these awards directly after the Award Ceremony each year, and request that publishers indicate on each book whether it is being submitted for the Writer's or the Illustrator's Award.
- Committee members will receive submitted books throughout the year.
- The Chair will verify that submitted books are eligible; i.e., that the authors of books submitted for the Writer Award have no more than three previously published picture books and that the illustrators of books submitted for the Illustrator Award have no more than three previously published picture books. The Chair will periodically send a list of eligible submitted books to the committee.
- Committee members make notes on each book.
- Committee members submit to the Chair, no later than three weeks prior to the Jury meeting, a short list of no more than ten books they consider worthy of each Award, with brief justifications.
- The Chair will compile short lists of nominated books and distribute the lists with justifications to the committee members prior to the Jury meeting.
- The Curator of de Grummond will collect a copy of each book recommended on the short lists.
- At the selection meeting, the Chair will ask each person who nominates a book to speak for it.
- If there is no objection to removing a book from the table, it is removed.
- If there is objection, the book remains.
- When all of the books have been surveyed, committee members choose, in writing, the top three books they consider worthy of the award.
- Ballots are counted and tallied by the ex-officio member who uses a weighted voting system (rank 1=4, 2=3, 3=2 points). Points are summed and reported.
- The winner must have both a simple majority of first place votes and a plurality of points.
- Discussion and voting continue until the choice is clear.
- The ex-officio member breaks a tie.
- The committee may choose to name Writer and/or Illustrator Honor Awards. Only books that received points on the award ballot will be eligible to be named honor books. The committee will decide how many honor books to name, and whether they will be selected from the next highest books on the original winning ballot or to ballot again.
- The committee will rank the honor books in order of preference for the following purpose only. Should the winner not be able to attend the awards ceremony OR if the publisher will not make a firm commitment to purchase and affix the medallion to the winning book, the Award will then pass in order to the honor book whose author/illustrator can attend the awards ceremony and whose publisher can and will meet these qualifications. In such a case, the original winner will be designated an honor book.
- The Curator of de Grummond will notify the publisher(s) of the winning book(s) and discuss the arrangements to assure that the author and/or illustrator will be available to receive the award in person. The Curator also arranges for the publisher(s) to purchase EJK medallions.

Nature of the Awards and the Award Ceremony

- A cash award of $1000 and the EJK medallion suspended in lucite and inscribed with the recipient's name will be presented to the winning author and the winning illustrator at the award celebration.
- If one book receives both awards, the author/illustrator will each receive $1000 and the EJK medal inscribed with the recipient's name.
- If the same person receives both the author and illustrator awards, the cash award will be $1500.
- It is essential that the author and the illustrator appear in person to receive the awards. The publishers are responsible for making arrangements for the author and the illustrator to be present to accept the awards in person.
- The award for Honor books will be a certificate.
- The celebration is held during the Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival at the University of Southern Mississippi.
- Gold medallion book seals depicting Peter in a red snow suit from The Snowy Day, or a digital image of the seal, will be made available at cost to the publisher. It is essential and required that the publisher purchase and affix the seal to all hard cover copies of the winning books or have the seal imprinted on the cover of the books. The publisher may have the seal imprinted on the cover of the soft cover copies of the books. All charges are at cost.

Submissions

Entries from publishers, based on the award criteria, are welcomed throughout the year. The deadline for submission is December 15th of each year.

The Committee will accept digital books for award consideration. If the digital book is also available in a hardcover or paperback format, the book must be submitted in its hardcover or paperback edition.

Publishers will identify submitted books as EJK New Writer and/or New Illustrator Award entries, and send one copy of each book to each jury member; to the Curator of the de Grummond; and to Dr. Deborah Pope, Executive Director of the EJK Foundation. It is critical that each juror, the Curator, and the Director receive a copy of each book in order that it be properly considered for the award.

For additional information, please contact Ellen Ruffin, Curator, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College, #5148, Hattiesburg, MS 39406 Phone: 601-266-4349. Email: ellen.ruffin@usm.edu

EJK New Writer and New Illustrator Award Committee – 2015-2016

Following is a list of current members of the Jury and the ending dates of their three-year terms:
Carolyn Brodie, Chair 4/18 (2nd term)
Rita Auerbach, 4/17 (2st term)
Jenny Brown, 4/18 (1st term)
Jason Chin, 4/17 (1st term)
KT Horning, 4/17 (1st term)
Angela Johnson, 4/18 (2nd term)
Sean Qualls, 4/17 (1st term)
Caroline Ward 4/16 (1st term)
Paul Zelinsky, 4/18 (2st term)
Ex-Officio: Ellen Ruffin

Thus, terms of the present Jury will end as follows:
April, 2016: Caroline Ward (1st term)
April, 2017: Rita Auerback (2nd term), KT Horning (1st term), Jason Chin (1st term), Sean Qualls (1st term)
April 4/18: Paul Zelinsky (2nd term), Carolyn Brodie (2nd term), Jenny Brown (1st term), Angela Johnson (1st term)

2015-2016 Executive Committee
USM, Curator, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection: Ellen Ruffin
Committee Chair: Carolyn Brody
EJK Foundation: Deborah Pope