

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

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

Background

The Ezra Jack Keats (EJK) Book Award for New Writer was conceived in 1983 by Hannah Nuba, Director of the New York Public Library's Early Childhood Resource and Information Center (ECRIC), 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 a co-sponsor of the award. The EJK Foundation is responsible for financial support and advisory counsel, and the de Grummond is responsible for administration.

Executive Committee

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

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

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

The Jury shall be composed of nine people, one of whom will serve as Chair and among whom will be illustrators, authors, librarians, early childhood educators, book reviewers, literary critics, and members of such professional organizations as the International Literacy Association, National Council of Teachers of English, American Library Association, National Association for the Education of Young Children and Children's Book Council. An ex officio member will attend the Jury meeting and vote if there is a tie.

Committee 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 Chair at an interval prior to the annual Award Ceremony. This will allow time for discussion and approval by the Executive Committee, the extension of invitations and the receipt of acceptances. The Chair will invite new members to join the Jury following approval by the Executive Committee. New members can then be introduced at the Award Ceremony and exiting members thanked for their service.

The Chair will serve a two-year term.

Publicity

The Office of University Communications of USM will publicize the EJK Book Award for New Writer and New Illustrator by preparing and disseminating press releases, notifying media of presentation events, and communicating through appropriate news channels. The EJK website will link to the de Grummond web pages for the EJK Book Award for New Writer and for New Illustrator, which will outline procedures and guidelines for submission of books to be considered for the award. The de Grummond Collection will further promote the Award 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, Publishers Weekly, ILA's The Reading Teacher, the American Federation of Teachers' American Teacher, The New York Times, and other local and national press and appropriate listservs. The Committee Chair and the Curator of the de Grummond will maintain a current publisher list for effective publicity and for Award submissions.

Guidelines and Criteria for the EJK Book Award for New Writer

The EJK Book 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 folktales or retelling of folktales).
- 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.

The Award is given for distinguished writing and text, not for illustration.

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

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 the EJK Book Award for New Illustrator

The EJK Book Award is given to a new illustrator for a picture book illustrated 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.
- Demonstrate excellent command of the chosen medium.
- Display freshness and originality in style and/or form of artistic expression.

The Award is given for distinguished artwork that creatively and skillfully embodies the essence of the story or text.

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

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 each award directly after the Award ceremony each year, and request that publishers indicate on each book whether it is being submitted for the Award for New Writer or New Illustrator.

Committee members will receive submitted books throughout the year.

The Chair will verify that submitted books are eligible; i.e., that the authors and illustrators of books submitted for a Book Award have no more than three previously published picture books. The Chair will periodically send a list of eligible submitted books to the Committee.

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Committee members will make notes on each book.

Committee members will 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 the de Grummond will collect a copy of each book recommended on the short lists.

At the Jury meeting, the Chair will ask each Committee member who nominated a book to speak for it.

If there is no objection to removing a book from the table, it will be removed. If there is an objection, the book will remain.

When all of the books have been surveyed, Committee members will choose, in writing, the top five books they consider worthy of the award.

When ten or fewer books remain in consideration, members will submit a written ballot to rank their top three books.

Ballots will be counted and tallied by the ex officio member, who will use a weighted voting system (rank 1 = 4 points, rank 2 = 3 points, rank 3 = 2 points). Points will be added together and reported.

The winner must have both a simple majority of points and first-rank votes.

Discussion and voting continue until the choice is clear.

The ex officio member breaks a tie.

The Committee will also select a runner-up. Should the winner not be able to attend the Award 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 to the runner-up who can attend the Award Ceremony and whose publisher can and will meet these qualifications.

The Committee may choose to name Honor Books for New Writer and/or New Illustrator. 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 to select books that have the most points after the winners and runners-up or to vote again on a new ballot.

The Curator of the de Grummond will notify the publishers of the winning books and discuss the arrangements to ensure that the author and/or illustrator will be available to receive the Award in person. The Curator will send letters to the publishers informing them of their responsibilities regarding the EJK Book Award.

Nature of the Awards and the Award Ceremony

A cash award of \$1,000 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 Ceremony.

If one book receives both awards, the author and illustrator will each receive \$1,000 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 \$1,500.

It is essential that the author and the illustrator appear in person to accept the Award. The publishers are responsible for making arrangements for authors and illustrators to be at the Award Ceremony.

The award for Honor Books will be a glass plaque inscribed with the recipient's name.

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 snowsuit from *The Snowy Day*, or a digital image of the seal, will be made available at cost to the publisher. It is required that the publisher purchase and affix the seal to all copies of the winning books or have the seal imprinted on the cover of the books.

Submissions

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

Publishers will identify submitted books as EJK Award entries for New Writer and/or New Illustrator, and send one copy of each book to each Committee member; to the Curator of the de Grummond; and to Dr. Deborah Pope, Executive Director of the EJK Foundation. It is critical that each Committee member, 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 of the 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 Book Award Committee 2017 - 2018

Award Selection Committee

- KT Horning, Chair
- Angela Johnson
- Dr. Claudette McLinn
- Sean Qualls
- Don Tate
- Lettycia Terrones
- Caroline Ward
- Junko Yokota
- Paul Zelinsky
- Ex Officio: Ellen Ruffin