

General Discussion Guidelines

The following guidelines are adapted from:
The Newbery & Caldecott Mock Election Kit: Choosing Champions in Children's Books from the Association for Library Services to Children.
Published by the American Library Association in 1994.

- * Speak loudly enough to be heard.
- * Private conversations during the discussion are discouraged.
- * Speak briefly when it is your turn.
- * Listen carefully to the substance of what is being said.
- * Respond to the comments of others.
- * Talk with each other rather than to the chairperson (librarian).
- * No right or wrong answers exist.
- * Acknowledge positive points first.
- * After all positive points have been made, discuss negatives.
- * Speak only to the terms, criteria, and definitions for the award.
- * Avoid generalities such as "This was a nice book" without critical analysis of why this is so.
- * Make comparisons but only to those other books being considered for the award. Do not consider the author's past work.
- * Each participant is expected to have read the books and to express their opinions to the group.

Criteria

Committee members need to consider:

- Interpretation of the theme or concept-- What is the main theme (the big idea or message)of the book? How well does the author write about this theme?
- Presentation of information including accuracy, clarity, organization--Does the book make sense? Is it easy to understand? Are the facts in the book true?
- Development of plot--Does the plot (what happens in the story) make sense? Does the plot move quickly or slowly? Or does it move too quickly or too slowly? Does the ending feel right? Or is the ending too abrupt or tie things up too easily? Does the ending leave too many unanswered questions?
- Representation of characters--How real are the characters? Are they believable? How much do you know about them? Can you picture them?
- Representation of setting--Where does the book take place? Is the setting important to the story or not? If it is, how does the author create the feeling of place? Does this place feel real?
- Appropriateness of style & tone--How does the style of the writing contribute to the book? If the author has written a mystery, did the author write so that you weren't quite sure what was happening? Did the author make you feel scared? If the book is supposed to be funny, did it make you laugh?

TERMS and CRITERIA for the Newbery Medal

1. The Medal shall be awarded annually to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published in English in the United States during the preceding year. There are no limitations as to the character of the book considered except that it be original work. Honor Books may be named. These shall be books that are also truly distinguished.

SO--

- a) The book has to have been published in 2008--no earlier
- b) It has to have been published 1st in the United States--nowhere else
- c) The book has to have been originally written and published in English

2. The Award is restricted to authors who are citizens or residents of the United States.

3. The committee in its deliberations is to consider only the books eligible for the award, as specified in the terms.

4. "Contribution to American literature" indicates the text of a book. It also implies that the committee shall consider all forms of writing – fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Reprints and compilations are not eligible.

5. A "contribution to American literature for children" shall be a book for which children are a potential audience. The book displays respect for children's understandings, abilities, and appreciations. Children are defined as persons of ages up to and including fourteen, and books for this entire age range are to be considered.

6. "Distinguished" is defined as:

- *marked by eminence and distinction: noted for significant achievement
- * marked by excellence in quality
- * marked by conspicuous excellence or eminence
- * individually distinct

This means that a book that is a true contender for the Newbery Medal is one that STANDS OUT--that's really much much better than most of what you usually read. There are lots of good books out there--but this book has to be EXTRAORDINARY.