

*“Award Winning Children's Books”*

Katie Young

"Hundreds of cats, thousands of cats, millions and billions and trillions of cats." This chorus found over and over in the book *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Ga'g, recognized as the first modern picture book, describes the choices faced by a little old man looking to bring back a kitten for his wife. Adapted slightly, "hundreds of books, thousands of books, millions and billions and trillions of books" and this chorus describes the choices faced by school teachers everywhere while selecting books for their students and classroom library. With literally thousands of books to choose from, how do we as teachers know which are the best books for our kids to be reading?

Fortunately, every year, the American Library Association and other organizations give us an indication of which books and authors to consider. The Newberry Medal and the Caldecott Medal are two awards given every year to "the author of the most distinguished contribution to children's literature" and "the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children", respectively. These awards are the most prestigious awards an author and illustrator can be awarded in the field of children's literature. They signify great works of extremely talented authors and illustrators.

Throughout my years of reading and collecting books, I have come to collect a great many award winning books. My mother started the tradition by paying special attention to the book order clubs and watching out for that "Award-Winner" notification. She knew that these books were special and even without reading them knew that they were the best books for my sister and I to read. Once I got older and began collecting books on my own, I too watched out of the corner of my eye for those notable books. I knew that a book with the Newberry Medal or the Scott O'Dell Award had something extra to offer me as a reader. I came to know authors who had won awards and not only read that book, but others by them. I immersed myself in proven quality literature and I hope I have emerged a more sophisticated reader because of it. I have learned how to appreciate good literature and have been given strong examples by which to judge any other book I do read.

I am going to be in my own classroom soon. I hope to have dozens of empty shelves to stock with books from my personal collection. I want my students to have the same exposure I did to books that have something special to give to the vast community of readers. From my experience in various classrooms, I know what a challenge it can be sometimes to get kids interested in reading. If I give those kids who are riding that fence between choosing to read versus a Gameboy, the ones who haven't been connected with just the right book, something I know is quality, I am one step closer in bringing a love of literature to every one of my students.

The collection is divided into the following sections: Newberry Honor Books (these books did not win the medal but were honored that year), Newberry Medal Winners, Caldecott Honor Books (again, these books were honored, but did not win), Caldecott

Medal Winners, Additional Medal Winners (books that have won other literary awards), and Non-Medal Winners (divided by genre).