

CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA
JUDGES' REPORT 1976

CLASS A

Winner to receive the medal of the Children's Book Council of Australia and an award of \$1700 from the Literature Board of the Australia Council.

SOUFFLÉ, Ivan FLY WEST

Angus & Robertson

This book is an outstanding account of the author's experiences in a Sunderland squadron during World War II.

Two points should be noted. Firstly, although the publication date shown in the book is 1974, no copies were received in Australia before 1975; therefore the decision was made to accept the book for consideration. Secondly, books submitted for this award rarely display the depth and completeness of this work, which should also have a wide appeal for older adolescents and adult readers.

The book was given the award because of its literary excellence and its sensitive treatment of a young man's involvement in war.

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

Andon to receive an award of \$800 from the Literature Board of the Australian Council.

HALLIDAYSON, Margaret A DOG CALLED GEORGE

Oxford University Press

George, the Old English Sheepdog, is a memorable character. His relationship with Tony is the major theme in this warm and satisfying story of family life.

Although no other books were considered of sufficiently high standard for commendation three works were felt worthy of mention.

David Martin's *Mr P and His Remarkable Flight*, published by Hodder and Stoughton, suffered from an overcrowded plot and a high degree of melodrama. However Vincent's dedication to the training of his pigeon was well handled; unfortunately not all the adult characters were completely credible.

Nance Donkin's *Patchwork Grandmother*, published by Hamish Hamilton is an interesting attempt at a difficult form of writing for children. While much has been achieved within the confines of limited vocabulary and relatively simple plot there are still some problems with character development.

Special mention is made of Simon French's *Hey Phantom Singlet*, published by Angus and Robertson. This is a promising first novel by a teenage author. Its greatest strengths are vigour and contemporary relevance; its weakness an uneven prose style.

CLASS B

PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

Winner to receive the Medal of the Children's Book Council of Australia.

ROUCHSEY, Dick THE RAINBOW SERPENT

Collins (Aust)

This interpretation of an Aboriginal creation myth is highly dramatic with richly coloured double page spreads. The text itself is not completely even in quality, but conveys something of the dignity and mystery of the myth. The book is notable for the quality of its production and design.

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

BROOKS, Ron ANNIE'S RAINBOW

Collins (Aust)

The judges were generally impressed with the magical quality of the illustration and the satisfactory integration of illustration and text. Colouring was delicate and draughtsmanship precise. It was felt the book could be interpreted on several levels.

COMMENDED:

GREENWOOD, Ted TERRY'S BRRRRMM G.T.

Angus & Robertson

The fresh approach of this book was appreciated. The close alliance of line graphics and text was supported by a purposeful use of bright colours. A strong sense of humour pervades the book which should appeal to most readers.

WAGNER, Jenny ARANEA

Illus. by Ron Brooks

Kestrel

An interesting experiment in black and white which very nearly succeeds. Judges were interested in the textural qualities and strong contrasts of the illustrations and the attempt to adopt the spider's viewpoint. It was not felt that complete success was achieved in this regard.

The judges also considered Letitia Parr's *Flowers for Samantha*, illustrated by Pat Mullens, published by Hicks Smith, worthy of mention for its sensitive treatment of a difficult and relevant subject, the death of a pet. However, quality of both text and illustration was felt to be uneven.

General comment on all books entered:

Although the judges were greatly impressed with the innovative and experimental quality of many of the picture book entries they were disappointed at the comparative lack of freshness in Class A entries. While the winning entry was non-fiction the general standard of non-fiction was distressingly low. The fiction continued to display the age-worn themes of rustic simplicity or out-back innocence, unconvincing history, and token ecology. Some of these themes were also evident in the unsuccessful picture book entries. Fantasy is still largely being treated in a shallow fashion which ignores the vital importance of this area of literature, one of the most demanding of both author and reader. Once again there was a disappointing lack of quality books for younger readers.

VISUAL ARTS AWARD

The Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council Award for the Best Illustrated Children's Book of the Year—Lenore Nicklin reports

The judges of the Children's Book Council Awards for 1976 met in Melbourne on the weekend of April 3 and 4. I was present at the meeting on April 4 to select the Visual Arts Board prize.

Some 46 books were submitted for Children's Book Council awards but there were finally not many possibilities for the Visual Arts Board prize. This was due more to the lack of illustration than to the lack of quality. However although the choices were limited the judges point out that in the past few years the standard of illustration has greatly increased and that although some bad work is still done, there is increasing evidence of fresh, original work and greater adventurousness. As one judge said "More people are having a go".