

EDITORIAL

The July issue of *Reading Time* is traditionally concerned with Children's Book Week. The complete Judges' Report is included as well as an article supporting the Awards, by Belle Alderman, judge representing the A.C.T. for 1982 and 1983. No matter whether we agree with the judges' decision, these Awards have boosted Australian children's books to the same standing as any of the better children's books published overseas. The judges' task is a difficult one: reading and evaluating almost one hundred children's books in the space of a few months. The result: a subjective decision of course—how could we expect anything else? These seven judges meet to form some sort of consensus; and this year, for example, the Picture Book of the Year won the unanimous vote of the judges. These Awards are not popularity contests: in the past, many "winners" have not been enthusiastically received by young readers. Rather, the Awards are a commendation for the overall quality of production, especially in terms of literary and artistic excellence.

Unfortunately, again this year, certain establishments have chosen to reveal what they consider the list of Award winners. Although the short-list is revealed, the actual winning, highly commended, and commended books are not officially known until Children's Book Week. I shall not continue to patronize these establishments who have shown such little regard for the Children's Book Council.

Lauren Harman.

CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA JUDGES' REPORT, 1983

The Children's Book Council of Australia wishes to acknowledge the generous support of the Literature and Visual Arts Boards of the Australian Council.

SHORT LIST

<i>Class A</i>		<i>Book of the Year</i>	
BRINSMEAD, Hesba	Longtime Dreaming	Angus & Robertson	
KELEHER, Victor	Master of the Grove	Penguin	
LURE, Morris	Toby's Millions	Penguin Australia	
MANLEY, Ruth	The Dragon Stone	Hodder & Stoughton (Aust.)	
NICHOLLS, Bron	Three-way Street	Hutchinson (Aust.)	
PHIPSON, Joan	The Watcher in the Garden	Methuen Australia	
SPENCE, Eleanor	The Left Overs	Methuen Australia	
WHEATLEY, Nadia	Five Times Dizzy	Oxford University Press	

6

Reading Time, July 1983

Class B

ALLEN, Pamela	Who Sank the Boat?	Nelson Australia
COX, David	Tin Lizzie and Little Nell	Aurora Press
EDWARDS, Tony	Ralph the Rhino	Wellington Lane Press
GENEROWICZ, Wildo	The Train	Penguin Australia
KLEIN, Robin	Thing	Oxford University Press
ORMEROD, Ian	Moonlight	Penguin
PAVEY, Peter	Battles in the Bath	Nelson Australia
TREZISE, Percy & ROUGHSEY, Dick	Turramullih the Giant Quinkin	Collins

Picture Book of the Year

The 1983 panel of judges considers the Australian Children's Book Awards serve the following purposes:

1. To focus attention on children's books
 2. To emphasize literary and artistic qualities
 3. To direct positive attention to standards and criteria of excellence
 4. To take account of the child as reader
 5. To encourage new talent
 6. To reward outstanding achievement likely to be of lasting merit.
- The conditions of entry direct the panel to consider books entered in three classes:

CLASS A—BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD

(to be awarded the Book of the Year Medal)

- 1.1 This Award is primarily for literary merit. However, the quality and design of the book as a whole are part of the standard, so the Judges will consider:

- (i) appeal to children;
- (ii) book design, production and quality of printing, having regard to the price at which it is published;
- (iii) general literary merit;
- (iv) quality of illustrations.

CLASS B—PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD

(to be awarded the Picture Book of the Year Medal/s)

- 1.2 This Award is for books intended primarily for younger children. Obviously, in this class the quality of the pictures largely determines the appeal. However, where it is a picture story book, the text, however slight, must be complementary. Traditional material may be used for the text. Artist and author may be one and the same person. As in Class A, the award-winning book in Class B should reach a high standard of production and design, and must have appeal to children.

CLASS C—JUNIOR BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD

(to be awarded the Junior Book of the Year Medal/s)

- 1.3 This Award was first made in 1982 and was described in the 1982 Judges' Report as a medal for the category of junior readers. The title of the award henceforth is to be known as the Junior Book of the Year Award.

A medal shall be presented to the author of the Junior Book of the Year and a further medal to the illustrator if, in the opinion of the judges, the illustrations add significantly to the text.

Reading Time, July 1983

7

The judges are asked to consider the following guidelines in making their selection for Class C:

- (1) This award is for a book intended primarily for children who have gained independent reading skills but who have not yet achieved the degree of maturity required for full appreciation of Class A titles.
- (2) Both text and illustration should be original work and the criteria listed under Class A should also apply to Class C.

In addition they have been instructed to draw up a short list of the best eight titles in Class A and Class B for immediate release to the public and the media.

Seventy-seven entries were received and evaluated in the three classes. Of these, 36 books were selected for further consideration.

The judges noted a significant increase in the number of picture story books, those books with extended text coupled with a large number of illustrations. As well, there were a number of books for readers reaching beyond the picture story books into short works of fiction. *The Prowler*, written by Geoffrey Dutton and illustrated by Craig Smith, and *Sharpar the Carpet Snake* by Lydia Pender, and illustrated in this second edition by Tony Oliver, are examples of the picture story book, while some of the short-listed titles in Class A represent the short work of fiction.

Two presentations of Australian ballads offer poetry in an attractive form for young people. Graham Jenkin's *The Ballad of the Blue Lake Bunyip*, illustrated by John Draper in robust tall-tale style, and *The Wild Colonial Boy and Other Bush Ballads*, illustrated by Max Mannix in a series of bush landscape and caricature paintings, are notable. Australian is worthy of note, too, in the intriguing counting book *One Woolly Wombat* by Ron Trince and Kerry Argent which features Australian flora and fauna.

The excellent production quality of *Peter and the Wolf*, the Australian National Gallery's first publication, sets high standards and offers a series of illustrations by the late Dania Vassilief in an accessible book form.

There were noticeable strengths in two areas of the Class A awards—historical fiction and realistic novels featuring urban settings. Within the historical fiction genre, diverse periods were examined such as the era of the Sydney Harbour Bridge construction in Deirdre Hill's *A Bridge of Dreams*; the search for gold in the Araluen Valley in Ronald Rose's *Five Honest Guineas*; and the pioneering settlement of South Australia in Phyllis Piddington's *Southern Rainbow*. Offering a glimpse of childhood in the early days of this century is Ted Greenwood's *Flora's Treasures*.

In addition to the realistic urban settings of *Three-way Street* and *Five Times Dizzy* appearing on the Class A short list, Lowell Tarling's *Taylor's Troubles* offers a contemporary glimpse into an anti-hero's first days in secondary school.

Two works of non-fiction were noted by the judges as particularly well produced and appealing to young people. Jim Fitzpatrick's *The Kids' Book of Bicycles in Australia* surveys the historical development of bicycles with numerous photographs and line drawings and snippets of information. History is much enlivened by Meredith Hooper in her *Doctor Hunger and Captain Thirst: Stories of Australian Explorers*, which examines the expeditions of fifteen explorers, using journals and documents, photographs and paintings of the era. Maps would have added to the presentation.

The judges were also pleased to note two further points of interest. A number of worthy books were published with the assistance of the Literature Board of the Australia Council. Some of these appeared on the judges' short list. And finally, a number of the newer publishers are continuing to diversify and increase the quality of their products.

CLASS A—BOOK OF THE YEAR

The four books reviewed here emerged as the most commendable from a list of some 43 publications judged as meeting the criteria for entry in Class A, outlined earlier in this report. The process of elimination that accompanied the final selection resulted in the short list above. These eight finalists reflect a noteworthy awareness by authors and publishers of Australian children's books of the need to continue satisfying a diverse range of reading interests and reading capabilities. Consequently the short list includes stories of high fantasy and stories of social realism, books that satisfy the limitations experienced by the newly independent reader and those that are suitable for adolescents. Books which rely on Australian settings and events for their effects are offset by others which have little or no Australian content. The over-all effect is one of heterogeneity.

BOOK OF THE YEAR

KELLEHER, VICTOR

Master of the Grove Penguin Australia
Literature Board Award \$1100

The judges considered this to be a gripping work in which every action and utterance contributes to the solution of the mystery and the resolution of the action. Australian-written high fantasy is rare and this deserves recognition for its convincing creation of a logical world, the sustained investigation into the struggle between good and evil, and the sharp and perceptive delineation of character. The action is well paced, the imagery finely drawn and the exposition clear.

In his telling Kelleher displays the techniques of a fine story-teller at work. He involves readers completely by getting them to predict (usually wrongly) the intermediate and final events; to interpret the significance of relationships, discoveries and events (again generally wrongly); and to become emotionally involved with hopes and fears for certain of the story's characters. In *Marna*, a memorable character has been created for whom the reader alternately feels empathy and liking, and then confusion and distrust.

The judges were a little disappointed with the publisher's choice of print size, which is so small that the intending reader has to overcome an initial barrier before beginning what is essentially an exciting, compelling novel.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

SPENCE, ELEANOR

The Left Overs Methuen Australia
Literature Board Award \$750

In this departure from her usual style, Eleanor Spence has created a satisfying tale of four foster children seeking another home. Much use is made of dialogue, rather than longer descriptive passages, to reveal the characters and to further the plot. This use of dialogue makes it very accessible to children.

The sincerity of telling, the depiction of the main character, the pleasant

touches of humour, the gentle tug on the reader's emotions and the carefully planned surprises make the book a memorable one.

The author carefully structures her book to deliver her message, though the book has no didactic tone—rather, it is involving, leading the reader to consider the children's problems from the children's viewpoints, and to reconsider them at various times from the viewpoints of the adults with whom they are involved.

The incidents, though possibly unlikely, are made convincing in their telling. The book should appeal to many children from a fairly wide age group who will be able to identify easily with Drew, the solemn, caring young hero, who through the course of the novel shows a steady development in character and growth into maturity and understanding.

COMMENDED

1. WHEATLEY, NADIA *Five Times Dizzy* Oxford University Press
Literature Board Award \$550

Literature which opens a window on another cultural consciousness and which does this with a blend of seriousness and humour for young Australian readers is unusual. The judges welcomed Nadia Wheatley's story for its realistic treatment of some of the delights and tensions which occur in a multicultural community. It is an honest and optimistic story which maintains its focus well on Mareka, a young Greek girl growing up in two cultures, whose purpose is to bring some happiness to her aged grandmother. The author is commended for her skill in presenting the mix of inner-city lives in considerable detail. What it is like living in one language or two, what it is to be part of the Greek corner shop and what it is to be an elderly person yearning for home, are matters which are handled with sympathy and understanding. Though the author deals realistically with prejudice and hostility she also depicts the basic goodwill, tolerance and kindness which work together to achieve the happy outcomes of the story. Her concerns are serious ones but the telling has a light touch which at times tends towards exaggeration. Some of the illustrations were considered to be of poorer quality than others.

2. LURIE, MORRIS *Toby's Millions* Penguin Australia
Literature Board Award \$300

Fewer than millions, but certainly numerous, are the features of this book that are likely to appeal to younger readers. Using as a base the conventional wish-fulfilling situation of discovering treasure, the author develops events that are wildly improbable and definitely amusing.

Personal relationships are exaggerations and reversals of the traditional ones. The son is father to the man to such an extent that it becomes laughable. The mother is so companionable that she ceases to have any established maternal role at all.

Via satire of a decidedly benign nature, Lurie's portrayal of the nuclear family and its 'dynamics' serves not only as a source of humour which is immediately appreciated, but, further serves as a means of introducing many and various stereotypes for extensive lampooning.

Toby's Millions is a lot of fun made accessible to younger readers through an easy narrative style. Furthermore, it has the additional virtue of being a story that readily lends itself to the shared literary occasion where adults read aloud to children.

CLASS B—PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

The judges felt that this year's entries maintained the high quality which has come to be expected of Australian children's picture books. The winners exhibited the complete integration of story and pictures essential for excellence. As well as this excellence of illustration, the winners and the short-listed titles generally possessed a high quality of book design, production and printing. However, this year's entries again pointed up the need for some authors to create stronger story lines to match and complement the quality of the illustrations.

The thirty-four entries covered a wide variety of styles and themes in which it was particularly pleasing to see humour and fantasy well represented. Judges were very aware that publishers are now producing picture books of increasing length of story and sophistication for older readers. Entries ranged from wordless picture books, through minimal text, to stories demanding advanced reading skills. From this it is evident that no longer are picture books being produced exclusively for younger readers. In view of this publishing evolution, both in Australia and overseas, perhaps the time has come to reconsider the condition that the Picture Book of the Year is intended primarily for younger readers.

PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

ALLEN, PAMELA *Who Sank the Boat?* Nelson Australia

Visual Arts Board Award \$1150

Who Sank the Boat? is an instantaneous visual and verbal delight and, not surprisingly, it won the judges' unanimous vote. This charming story of the perilous yet hilarious attempt by a cow, a donkey, a sheep, a pig and a tiny little mouse to go for a row in a boat on the bay is matched and heightened by masterly watercolour illustrations in bold, bright colours and softer, more subtle shades, and also occasional sepia tone drawings. Line definition and perspective are so fine that the illustrations effect a crisp, clear and sparkling picture of the bay and its surroundings, and also create each animal's humorous character quite precisely and distinctively.

Action is the key factor of this picture book and this Pamela Allen has portrayed superbly, not only in the landscape scenes with wind-blown tree trunks, dense scrub, rocky shorelines and disturbed water, but also in the gait and positioning of the animals. And it is the combination of this visual action and the simple rhythmic narrative, with its carefully chosen words—which read aloud so well—which establishes a marvellous sense of anticipation. The skilful use of the question "Do you know who sank the boat?" posed as each animal embarks ensures reader involvement and participation.

Book design is excellent. The framing of each full-page illustration, the type quality, size and spacing, the end-papers and jacket design all contribute to an aesthetically pleasing whole.

This is a book which is guaranteed to have timeless appeal for younger children.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

GENEROWICZ, WITOLD *The Train* Penguin Australia

Visual Arts Board Award \$700

The Train is a picture book without text, but with many dimensions. A story in the great chase tradition, this book physically and figuratively

unfolds to reveal a flood of visual excitements. Precision and humour in illustrative style is demonstrated emphatically in the action and myriad details of the guards' breathtaking pursuit of the two robbers through thirty-two carriages full of an amazing array of characters, creatures, machinery and happenings, cleverly creating sub-story upon sub-story.

In fact, such are the number and sophistication of visual jokes throughout, that careful inspection of all illustrations is required. Colours are muted—whether they be the yellow of machinery or the red of the train—and are suggestive of dusty tram-riding. Active involvement is ensured in this book full of fun and a sense of play which will continually extend the imagination and invite sharing as well as constant re-readings.

The book's concertina format caused considerable comment among the judges. When folded out, it measures 5.3 metres—one of the longest books in the world. No doubt its versatility will be tested, as it can be read as a book, frame by frame, opened out on the floor, or even used as a frieze.

COMMENDED

1. COX, DAVID *Tin Lizzie and Little Nell* Aurora Press
Visual Arts Board Award \$350

The universal appeal of the Hare and Tortoise story is retained in this Australian version with a race between a car and a horse-drawn vehicle. The text with its repetitive and balanced phrasing reads well aloud and keeps alive to the end the reader's sense of anticipation. The speech balloons add to the gentle humour evidenced in the text. Indian ink and water-colour wash is a medium well suited to conveying the slow-paced atmosphere of the Australian countryside in the 1930's. This Australian flavour is never obtrusive but permeates the entire book in the landscapes, the colouring, the clothes and the animals. Authentic period detail emerges with successive readings. There is good integration between text and pictures; the visual rhythm of the title-page is in complete accord with the flowing prose and the many pictorial contrasts reinforce the balance of the text. Once the race begins the action moves consistently from left to right and as the story pace quickens, so does the sense of movement until the climax is reached. The amusing, lively detail of the pictures matches and extends the easy humour of the text. This is a gentle book and although its impact may not be as strong or as wide as that of the two titles placed above it, it is a fine example of a good picture-book which will have lasting appeal.

2. TREZISE, PERCY and

- ROUGHSEY, DICK *Turrumulli the Giant Quinkin* Collins
Visual Arts Board Award \$300

This author-illustrator combination has again produced an excellent Aboriginal folk-love story about the Quinkin. It has sufficient incident to give the necessary child appeal but there is a certain stiffness of style which causes some awkwardness in reading aloud. The judges noticed a slight variation in art style from the previous works of this team. The beautiful colour sense we have come to expect is still there, but there is greater variation and a stronger sense of contrast. It is always difficult to avoid a sense of sameness in successive titles dealing with similar material, but this particular title does achieve a commendable freshness. The skies seem to glow with light and the sharp, clear images make a strong impact against

them. Interesting viewpoints and perspectives aid this dramatic effect as do the double-page spreads which suggest the vast Australian landscape so well. Considerable pictorial detail extends the story and gives authentic insight into the Aboriginal way of life.

CLASS C—JUNIOR BOOK OF THE YEAR

This recently established award directs attention to a neglected but important area of children's literature. Books in this class, while meeting the general standards set for these awards, must, in addition, be accessible to a specific readership—that of children, who although they possess independent reading skills, have not reached the degree of maturity required for full appreciation of longer more complex books.

The importance of good books at this level cannot be overstressed. New readers launching out independently need stimulating, varied and enjoyable material to maintain and extend their taste for reading, and to bridge the daunting gap between picture book and full-length novel.

This year the number of books considered in Class C was slightly greater than last year, but judges would have welcomed a wider field. Titles included picture books with extended text, books such as the amusingly written and cleverly illustrated *The Prowler*, short novels considered to be accessible to children in this reading group, such as *Toby's Millions*, and non-fiction titles such as *The Kids' Book of Bicycles in Australia*. Entries exhibited a positive, if predictable, bias towards humour. The award-winner, unanimously chosen, displays flair, creative skill, and a practical understanding of young readers' needs and preferences.

JUNIOR BOOK OF THE YEAR

- KCEN, ROBIN *Thing*
Illustrated by Alison Lester Oxford University Press
Children's Book Council of Australia Medal

Thing is an excellent example of book production for younger independent readers. The story has humour, tension, and a completely satisfying resolution. The text is well written in a matter-of-fact, deceptively simple style. It has a good sense of audience, and contains numerous inventive touches, echoed and extended by the illustrations, to delight and surprise the reader.

Intelligent layout, alternating text and pictures in varying patterns, breaks up blocks of text and opens up page space invitingly.

The story, a pleasingly structured urban fantasy about a girl, her sympathetic mum, a pet stegosaurus of real character, and a grumpy landlady, is told with skill by both author and illustrator, whose rapport with each other and their prospective audience is extremely good. The pictures, mainly in shaded black-and-white line, but with some in bright and cheerful colour, are as eloquent as the text, achieving great character and personality with deft, simple touches and delicate, amusing detail.

A medal has been awarded to both author and illustrator.