

## JUDGES' REPORT, 1985.

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

### SHORT LIST

#### CLASS A — BOOK OF THE YEAR

ALDRIDGE, James. *The true story of Lilli Stubeck*. Hyland House.  
BAILLIE, Allan. *Adrift*. Thomas Nelson.  
GLEESON, Libby. *Eleanor, Elizabeth*. Angus Robertson.  
KELLEHER, Victor. *Papio*. Kestrel.  
KLEIN, Robin. *Hating Alison Ashley*. Penguin.  
KLEIN, Robin. *Penny Pollard's Letters*. Oxford University Press.  
RODDA, Emily. *Something special*. Angus Robertson.  
SPENCE, Eleanor. *Me and Jeshua*. Dove Communications.  
WHEATLEY, Nadia. *Dancing in the Anzac Deli*. Oxford University Press

#### CLASS B — PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

BAKER, Jeannie. *Home in the sky*. Franklin Watts.  
COX, David. *Ayu and the perfect moon*. Bodley Head.  
GYNNELL, Donna (illus.) Amanda Graham (text). *Arthur*. Era Publications.  
LACIS, Astra (illus.) Christobel Mattingley (text). *The angel with a mouth organ*. Hodder Stoughton.  
MORIMOTO, Junko (illus.) Helen Smith (adaptor). *The inch boy*. William Collins.  
TANNER, Jane (illus.) Margaret Wild (text). *There's a sea in my bedroom*. Thomas Nelson.  
VIVAS, Julie (illus.) Mem Fox (text). *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*. Omnibus Books.

The 1985 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 recognize 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 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.

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

- (i) 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.
- (ii) Both text and illustration should be original work and the criteria listed under Class A should also apply to Class C.

In addition the judges were instructed to draw up a Short List of at least eight titles in Class A and Class B for immediate release.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS:

The number of entries in 1985 was 92 and it was encouraging that the number of last year's entries has been almost maintained. There was an increase in the entries for Class A and a corresponding drop in those for Class B.

The judges noted that there was a general level of competence in the books submitted, but there were few of outstanding quality. This restricted the field from which the winning titles were selected.

An interesting range of topical issues was explored in some entries. These included conservation in Bill Scott's *Shadows among the leaves* and youth unemployment in Erica Hale's *Catch the sun*. Familiar themes also appeared and in some cases were given a new orientation. Growing up was treated at different levels by Margaret Wild in *There's a sea in my bedroom* illustrated by Jane Tanner, and Ivan Southall in *A city out of sight*. The family was a focus for several books and while some such as Thyza Davey's *Waiting for May* and Margaret Pearce's *The misfit* featured changing relationships, others such as Jan Ormerod's *101 things to do with a baby* and Shirley Burke's *Birthday yo-yo* depicted everyday situations.

Australia's past was represented among the entries and included several ballads in picture book format. One interesting example was *Click go the shears*, illustrated by Robert Ingpen. An account of exploration was given by Alan Boardman and Roland Harvey in *The Crossing of the Blue Mountains*.

## COMMENDED

**WHEATLEY, NADIA.** *Dancing in the Anzac deli.* Oxford University Press. Literature Board Award \$500

This sequel to 'Five times dizzy' can stand alone, but readers would benefit from knowing the background to the characters and relationships.

The suburban setting of Newtown is convincingly portrayed in the text and supported by the detailed aerial map on the end papers. The Nikakis family, with their mixture of Greek and Australian language and ways, are shown as relating easily and naturally to their friends and neighbours. Cultures are seen to mix, while characters retain their basic identity. The Greek language and traditions are treated with care and respect and the frequent and appropriate use of Greek words and phrases reinforces this attitude.

While some of the background characters are shadowy, and the plot resolution is perhaps contrived, the adventure is fast moving and exciting and Mareka and her friends are very believable.

Yaya, the grandmother, comes into her own in this book as a strong and independent old woman whose influence extends far outside the immediate family, and whose powers are drawn from a mixture of commonsense and deep wells of traditional wisdom and beliefs. This strong presentation allows another feature of Greek family life to be seen and appreciated by other cultures.

The celebration of dance, with which the book ends, brings the community together on a lively interweaving of past struggles, present experiences, and hope for the future.

## CLASS B — PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

Although the picture books offered for consideration this year exceeded half the total number of entries, it was the unanimous decision of the judges that none of these reached the required level of excellence demanded of an award winner. Few of the entries approached that balance and integration of text, illustration and theme, complemented by a high standard of design and production which is required of the award winning picture book. In the books selected by the judges for the short list the themes were generally explorations of ordinary life with an emphasis on the child's growing awareness of and perception of his or her role in society. While some of these titles are set in Australia, the majority reflect a growth in the acknowledgement of the value and validity of other cultural experiences by Australian authors and illustrators.

With a few exceptions, there was little variety in approach and technique, however, some interesting variations in style were noted. In many of the picture books the illustrations suffered from a lack of attention to the text while others displayed an inappropriate or indeed inept handling of colour and design or a lack of technical expertise.

## PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

No award.

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

**MORIMOTO, JUNKO.** *The inch boy.* William Collins.

Visual Arts Board Award \$1200

'The inch boy', like the traditional Western folk tale of Tom Thumb, is the story of the adventures of an inch high boy. The baby, Issunoboshi, mysteriously appears at the home of a childless old couple. He eventually sets off for Kyoto to fulfill his ambition to become a Samurai. Issunoboshi has many adventures in his service with Lord Sanjo, including defeating the giant Red Demon.

The depiction of an inch high boy presents a distinct problem for an illustrator. There is either the risk that the small character will be lost in a full page spread or will be forced to relinquish his smallness in the closeup. Junko Morimoto has solved this artistic dilemma by embuing her Inch Boy with a distinctive vigour and placing him with the text as well as in the accompanying illustrations. In almost every page opening, Inch Boy is a vital character, well placed in his setting, and the reader is not forced into uncomfortable perspective. The arrangement of the text on the page is carefully executed so as to incorporate the white marginal spaces as an element in the overall page design. The use of the three quarter page spread eliminates the loss of vital portions of the illustrations in the gully.

Despite these strengths it was considered that the illustrations did not always reach a consistent and harmonious relationship with the text and that there were certain weaknesses in the retelling of this folktale.

## COMMENDED

**BAKER, JEANNIE.** *Home in the sky.* Franklin Watts.

Visual Arts Board Award \$1100

Collage has been used superbly to create the illustrations for 'Home in the sky'. Excellent photographic reproduction results in a three dimensional effect which is almost tactile.

New York, the setting, is vividly brought to life. Places and people are evoked through discriminating use of detail in foliage, building ornamentation, graffiti, newspaper and clothing. The reader is invited to look into the book and to participate in the different layers of story. A man releases pigeons for flight from the roof of a derelict building, a lost maimed pigeon is rescued by a boy who comes to realise that the bird must be free, a passenger reads horror stories in a squalid railway carriage, high buildings of the city loom threateningly. These motifs encourage the reader to create personal stories.

Book design is of high quality. Careful simplicity in many places sets off the complexity of double page spreads. Colour tones as background to the collage have been thoughtfully chosen.

The text fails to support the rhythm of detail and perspective which makes the picture sequence so vivid and engaging. The narrative lacks the immediate impact of the pictures which could stand powerfully alone.

## COMMENDED

**COX, DAVID.** *Ayu and the perfect moon.* Bodley Head.

Visual Arts Board Award \$700

The traditions of Balinese music and dance are fundamental to this book. Movement is illustrated in deft use of colour and line, while colour tones contrast the mood of quiet scenes in the moonlight with the drama of the 'angry

bird" dance. Well designed page layouts vary between close-ups with detail and long-shots where an atmosphere of community is created.

Ayu, an old woman in Bali, tells three girls about the village ceremonies of dance. As a young girl she practised until, at the time of the full moon, she performed for the whole village. The passing on of traditions through generations is emphasised by the device of the grandmother as narrator. However, the text is understated and fails to complement the dramatic impact of the pictures.

### CLASS C JUNIOR BOOK OF THE YEAR

Although it is acknowledged that meeting the needs of the readership for Class C may be a difficult task for writers, it was encouraging to note that a considerable number of entries fall within this category. The emergence of several publishers' series specifically intended for this audience is also worthy of note.

Titles considered included picture story books with substantial text, short stories, paperback originals as well as conventional hard cover novels of appropriate length and style.

#### JUNIOR BOOK OF THE YEAR

**RODDA, EMILY.** *Something special.* (illus. by Noela Young) Angus Robertson. Literature Board Award \$500

Young readers learn to make sense of their world from the outside. Frequently they focus upon clothes as means of deciding what people do or what sort of people they are meeting. Emily Rodda, with these clear and important insights tells a story of a girl, Sam, whose mother is in charge of a clothing stall at the school fete. Browsing through this collection, Sam is drawn to her "special" choice of garments which evoke in her "dreams" of the people who were the original owners.

During the activity at the fete Sam realises that there is a great deal of similarity between the characters of the original owners of her special clothes and the people who choose to buy them.

Emily Rodda encourages the young reader to observe how dress and speech give implicit messages about character and attitude. It is a gentle and carefully detailed story which has a quiet power to hold the attention of the reader. Noela Young's illustrations strengthen the authenticity of the setting.

#### JUDGES:

Jill Gamble, ACT  
Joyce Kirk, NSW  
Michele Dwyer, QLD  
Elizabeth O'Loughlin, SA

Carolyn Logan, WA  
Hugo McCann, TAS  
Margaret Aiken, VIC

### THE WINNING AUTHORS:

JAMES ALDRIDGE, author of the Book of the Year, *'The true story of Lilli Stubeck'*, was born July 1918 at White Hills, Victoria, where his father was a newspaper publisher. Aldridge began a newspaper career at the age of sixteen, as an office boy on the Melbourne *'Sun'*. At the outbreak of World War II he became a freelance war correspondent for the Australian Newspaper Service. He witnessed the Russian attack on Finland, covered the Italian — Greek war, as well as many other front line battles. This experience was drawn upon for his first novel *'Signed with their honour'*, published in 1942. He is the author of many works including novels, short stories, plays, screenplays and travel books. His other children's novel is *'The flying 19'*, published by Hamish Hamilton in 1966. James Aldridge and his wife are making the trip from London (where they now reside) to Canberra to attend the Awards Presentation.



LIBBY GLEESON, author of the Highly Commended title, *'Eleanor, Elizabeth'*, grew up in the NSW country, in Young, Glenn Innes and Dubbo. She studied at the Sydney University, taught for two years and then travelled to Europe spending five years living in Italy and London. During this time she began her first novel *'Eleanor, Elizabeth'*. Gleeson now lives in Sydney with her husband, New Zealander, Euan Tovey and her daughters, Amelia and baby Josephine. She continues to work at Sydney University teaching English as a second language, caring for her baby daughter, as well as working on a new book for children.



ELEANOR SPENCE, author of the Commended title, *'Me and Jeshua'*, was born in Sydney in 1928. She completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at Sydney University in 1949, worked at teaching English and History, as a public service librarian in Canberra, and a children's librarian in Coventry, England. Since 1958, Eleanor Spence has produced many children's books as well as raising three children. Her earlier work includes historical fiction, and "accounts of everyday Australian family life focussed on one 'problem' character". She has twice won the Children's Book Council's Book of the Year Award, in 1964 for *'The green laurel'* and in 1977 for *'The October child'*. Spence received a Literary Board grant to assist with the writing of *'Me and Jeshua'*, especially with her research in the Middle East.

