

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS

JUDGES' REPORT

2007

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[LOGO]

*Published in 2007 by The Children's Book Council of Australia
ABN 14009580956
ISSN 10383336
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THE JUDGES' REPORT

INTRODUCTION

There were 334 entries made in the four categories of fiction and picture book awards, almost twice the number of entries received in 1995. This year, authors and artists explored different literary forms and adopted new technologies and book production techniques in order to create books reflective of the robust health of Australian publishing for young people in a new century. Proper regard for the aesthetic quality of language was shown by both new and experienced writers, as they played with words and experimented with form; it is pleasing to see poetry and the short story represented on shortlists.

In considering the quality of illustrations, book design, production, printing and binding, the judges acknowledge the successful books as team efforts: author, illustrator, editor and designer all working together. Poor copy editing, grammatical and syntactical errors, and no evidence of spell-check in otherwise sound entries, were a source of frustration, as they seem to have been since Judges' reporting began.

In no particular order, pirates, loss and separation, ageing hippie parents and penguins were popular themes across formats this year.

OLDER READERS

25 out of the 87 entries were notable. Bullying was explored by several writers in different ways and the suffering of the victim, whether the bullying is physical, verbal or cyber, was well realised. Imagining Australia's, and society's, future is not new territory for this age group and there was a healthy dose of tales of Australia's recent past as well. Love in all its confusing, terrifying and fulfilling wonder was an overarching theme, and family stories were told with both magic realism and the starkest detail. Growth and rite-of-passage experiences are always present in the genre, and this year many of the outstanding texts tackled this area with skill and insight, creating moving and compassionate explorations of this perennial theme.

Experiments with form – the short story and the verse novel - continue to push boundaries and offer varied reading experiences for young people. The Older Readers category also continues to highlight the growing area of quality fiction for the upper end of this age group with both challenging and confronting themes being explored. Whilst it is always pleasing to see books tackling difficult issues with skill, it is also noteworthy that a number of texts choose to entertain and engage the reader through the accessible genres of humour and fantasy, with some being both notable and shortlisted this year. Five of the notables, including two on the shortlist, were by first-time writers for this age group. This expansion of Australia's already talented range of authors writing for older readers is gratifying. The judges had a pleasantly difficult time selecting notables, and from them the shortlist, as the standard this year was so high.

YOUNGER READERS

As entries in this category encompass the years when readers are consolidating their skills, illustrations play an important part in scaffolding the text. In recognition of this, CBCA has included acknowledgment of the illustrators of works of short fiction in the annotations for these entries this year.

The judges particularly commend writers on their skilful storytelling for this challenging audience. Oral traditions blended successfully with the vernacular to produce good short fiction. Younger children are often eager to progress their reading in a series, and there were some great examples of these in this year's entries. Established series like *Quentaris*, *Rangers Apprentice* and *Doomsday Rats* had strong entries, and some newcomers like *Fantastica* and *Animal Stars* show the abilities of writers to advantage within a deceptively simple form. The Museum of Australia's series, *Making Tracks*, with each volume exploring selected museum artifacts through narrative, was an interesting example of the increasingly popular blending of fact and fiction. Texts that are part of a continuing series do suffer, in the awards process, from the need for them to 'stand alone' for judging purposes. Series books that are included in the notables have managed this with cohesive narrative.

Pirates and fantasy remain perennial themes, and animals such as goats, dogs and sharks were main characters. In contrast to other categories, out of 160 entries only 17 were notable. Several entries were let down by the mismatch of form and language suitable for the intended age. All too often a book which looked like a terrific read for an emerging reader would have content and vocabulary which were unnecessarily dense or challenging, and an illustrator's talent was wasted on charming, age-appropriate drawings which could not help. Inappropriate and inaccurate covers did not assist some entries.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Despite attracting only 23 entries, this category was much stronger than last year with 15 books listed as notable. The best books for this age group provide a shared experience for both reader and listener, and the shortlisted books were those that the judges felt met this test well. There were a number of good quality and affordable publications made of boards or with pages of stiffened paper, and of a size to be easily held by small hands, with obvious baby or toddler appeal in mind. Having a range of books like this to choose from can only help parents, who are eager to take advantage of the window of opportunity for developing essential pre-literacy skills which presents itself in the first three years of life.

Outstanding entries in this category featured simple stories with emotional depth, memorable characters who came to life and quietly - or loudly - asserted their place in the world. The enduring popularity of animal protagonists with this age group relates directly to the 0-8 year old curiosity about their place in life. A main character who is furred or four legged can explore their fears and empathies in a safe and enjoyable way. Cows, kangaroos and the odd possum cavorted their way into several titles this year.

Pitching the story and pictures at just the right level for this age group is a balancing act which is difficult, and some books were let down by the concept being poorly executed.

Beautiful pictures tried to prop up narratives that went nowhere and, conversely, simply lovely prose withered with no illustrative support - not a new scenario in 2007 but depressingly recurrent. The incorporation of features such as pop-ups and flaps have the potential to extend a young reader's engagement with the text, but their presence must be integral to advancement of the narrative. In several books, flaps had the effect of obscuring or stopping the flow of the story and so their function was questionable. It was pleasing to see endpapers used effectively in many books to extend the whole narrative.

PICTURE BOOKS

Once again, originality and innovation in books for young people are showcased in the notable and shortlisted books in this category. Some of the most interesting and challenging entries broke the boundaries of the picture book with marvellous collages composed of handwritten text with digital or hand drawn images. The influence of craft techniques such as scrapbooking and altered books could be seen in some of these. The use of digital technology was not the only risk taken, with some creators experimenting with oversized formats and intertextuality. At the same time several notable entries were composed simply in watercolour or pencil. Outstanding books in this category are the result of a team effort, with authors and illustrators, together with editors and designers, working together to produce an integrated whole.

Appealing across ages 0 - 18 led to a great diversity in theme, although the issues of water and conservation pervaded this year, whilst universal themes such as displacement and integration were explored both lightly and in depth.

Presentation of information in picture book form is not new. If the artist and author choose this format some guidance for further reading or investigation is not out of place. This was demonstrated by the inclusion of extensive explanatory notes disguised as forewords or appendices or, in some cases, both. The blurring of the lines between fact and fiction is occurring across all genres, and there is no better embodiment of this than the picture book of the 21st century, however too many explanatory notes can detract from a book's success in utilising the picture book genre.

INFORMATION BOOKS

The 61 books entered for the Eve Pownall Information Book Award cover a wide range of subjects and styles. It was particularly encouraging to see so many authors and illustrators documenting factual material in new and imaginative ways. This is reflected in the Short List, where six quite distinctive books encapsulate the essence of their subjects whilst engaging the young reader in very different ways. Facts, language and graphic design have come together to create some memorable books.

Australian content dominated the entries: Australians at war, in the goldfields, incarceration, looking for dinosaurs, living in Antarctica, travelling to China and India, and photographing wildlife; all contributed to the kaleidoscope of topics and presentations. Apart from the Australian content, entries included additional titles in series such as the popular "It's true" series, several books offering advice on sex education and how to make the most of being female, and books on how to draw

cartoons. Famous people including Joan of Arc, Captain Cook and Charles Darwin, along with yoga for children and endangered animals, also featured. For the most part, authors took their subjects very seriously, but there were welcome threads of humour through many of the books.

Very little indigenous material was evident, but two titles, *Bush Tucker* and *Gudjal Books* stood out. *Bush Tucker* highlights the skills of Aboriginal people in using the available food sources and the importance of food in relation to the land. *Gudjal Books*, to quote the author William Santos, “would be an important tool to build respect, knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the Gudjal language dialects spoken in this country”.

Whilst a large number of entries dealt with predictable subjects - Australian history including gold and convicts, penguins, elephants, Australian animals, - others tackled less popular topics such as breast cancer, cystic fibrosis and autism. *What about me? The autism survival guide* uses a colourful, cartoon character in presenting situations to help siblings and classmates better understand the way children with autism behave. *My Mum has breast cancer* is the personal account of a mother and her 6 year old son’s experience with the disease and its treatment. Cystic fibrosis has a wonderful ambassador in Emmah Money, the young author of *The Words Inside*.

Graphic design is particularly important in information books, where a busy layout, badly placed headings and fact boxes, blurred and recycled photographs can mar an otherwise competent book. Old-fashioned fonts, poor design, and dated and unappealing covers also detracted from some entries. The ubiquitous double-page spread is still standard for many information books, particularly those in series covering Australian animals and Australian history. However, it is noteworthy that several in this category, including *Bush Tucker* and *Cane Toads*, show considerable imagination in both their design and use of language and have been included in the notables.

A lack of editorial direction resulted in some good ideas being let down by poor execution. Sometimes there was a mismatch between fact and fiction, where the story took over from the factual content – Eve Pownall judges are mindful that the prime intention of the Award is the documenting of factual material - and inaccuracies detracted from otherwise excellent works. Better indexing was needed in some cases, especially where there was a complex text with large blocks of information and few headings. Listing of sources did not always indicate which were suitable for children and which were those used by the author. Again, many references were to old books and adult web sites.

Overall, it has been a pleasure reading and judging the information books on offer this year. The judges have been surprised and delighted by beautiful illustrations, well-wrought texts and eye-catching formats. Publishers and creators are to be commended for the care and attention lavished on the best of these books, and for providing young readers with exciting and stimulating information on the world around them.

* * *

All the judges feel privileged to have had the responsibility of choosing the best in Australian books for young people, and present the winners and honour books of the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards here for your perusal.

Book of the Year: Older Readers

WINNER

LANAGAN, Margo

RED SPIKES

Allen & Unwin

ISBN 1741146577

198 pages

Birth and re-birth with all its hope, messiness, joy and foreboding is a central theme in this collection of stories. A good short story combines memorable characters in challenging situations in miniature, allowing us a tantalizing glimpse into another world. An outstanding short story collection does all this, but links its disparate narratives in a way that leads us to marvel at the whole. *Red Spikes* is a superb companion to Lanagan's previous collections *White Time* (2000) and the previously short-listed *Black Juice* (2005).

The stories in this collection range from macabre to confronting to just plain scary. Dylan's mother is the expert midwife but he must help the warrior queen give birth. Will Hannimanni rally from his illness or will the Bachelors be at all the Dotties? Annie's sweetheart, spying on her wedding, learns the secret that could blast her day - and life - apart. Wee Willie Winkie comes to gruesome life - you'll know now why you get a shiver when you hear the rhyme. A feathered friend returns from another world to turn a girl from the dark side. An encounter with a true hero ennobles a schoolboy into smashing a bully. A house on a string holds hopes and prayers for a God-bothered island and a daughter who seems to constantly disappoint finds the reason and a solution. Lanagan gives us a slice of a life, dragging us into the turmoil of each character's worlds through beautifully crafted stories where every word is carefully chosen. At times the mature reader must work hard to understand context, but the effort is worth making. Her characters, though often unloved and displaced, still have a place in their world, and ultimately the collection affirms hope, forgiveness and love.

HONOUR BOOKS

CORNISH, D.M.

MONSTER BLOOD TATTOO: BOOK 1 FOUNDLING

Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia

ISBN 1862916055

433 pages

In an impressive debut novel, Cornish creates an exciting, inventive, imaginative fantasy quest. Rossamund, from Madam Opera's Estimable Marine Society for Foundling Boys and Girls, embarks on a career as a lamplighter. This ambition is thwarted as he gets on the wrong boat and is kept as a slave. After escaping he is helped by Europe, a fulgar, a monster fighter with the special talent of generating and manipulating electricity and lightning. Europe promises to deliver Rossamund to his destination, but he must work with or alongside her in the process. The world of the half continent is constructed with meticulous Dickensian overtones, especially in the opening sequence, and has a compelling plot structure and vivid descriptive passages. Characters are revealed through both text and Cornish's detailed silhouette illustrations. The encyclopedic Explicarium makes for an impressive extension to the text, including maps and glossary. The language is sophisticated and elegant, demonstrating Cornish's ability to create a dark and epic tale that introduces us to new and engaging characters and ideas.

DUBOSARSKY, Ursula

THE RED SHOE

Allen & Unwin

ISBN 174114 285 7

183 pages

Dubosarsky masterly interweaves the apparent simplicity of life in Australia in the fifties with the Petrov affair and the dark secret of one family. The entwining of the three subplots, linked by the symbol of the red shoe, helps to clarify for readers a story of great depth. Matilda and her two sisters are living by the beach near Sydney. Matilda, egged on by her invisible friend Floreal, notices unusual comings and goings from the house next door and fantasies that the new neighbours might be spies. Her father is suffering trauma from the war and is often away; the charming, opportunistic Uncle Paul seems to be trying to take his place. The construction of this story is deceptively seamless and the shoe as device is successfully used in several manifestations. The novel gradually unfolds as we begin to hear the voices of Matilda's sisters. Newspaper reports of the time reproduce not only the political fervor but also glimpses of the way Australian society wished to see itself. The novel uses these elements to build over a long hot summer to a heart-stopping finale that will leave the mature reader with much to think about

SHORT LIST

BAUER, Michael Gerard

DON'T CALL ME ISHMAEL!

Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia
ISBN 1862916667
277 pages

Told with great humour through well-constructed characters, this impressive school story explores the world of bullies, geeks, freaks and nerds. There are numerous comic accidents with hilarious results. The clever wordplay Bauer uses culminates in the antics of the debating team, to the delight of the reader. Ishmael's sense of loneliness, hopelessness and isolation is drawn from his self-imposed preoccupation with an incurable disease that is ultimately assuaged by him overcoming fears and promises of better times ahead. The book cover design combines school paraphernalia with links to intertextuality that readers will delight in identifying with.

CLARKE, Judith
ONE WHOLE AND PERFECT DAY
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 1741148561
286 pages

This rich and involving story, told with a hint of magic realism, explores well beyond the party being arranged by Lily for her grandfather, an event Lily hopes will be perfect in every way. This experienced writer has presented an engaging narrative that deals with issues of dysfunctional families, covert racism, single parentage and first love with a deft and careful touch. There is further comment as well about societal perceptions of homeless youth and people in aged care. Though many characters people this narrative, their stories are beautifully woven together to produce an engaging tapestry that is devoid of sentimentality. Far from depressing the reader, the ending is an affirmation of the enduring power of friendship and family, and shows that the two are not necessarily separate, and that the varied threads of life each hold meaning.

SHANAHAN, Lisa
MY BIG BIRKETT
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 1741145872
333 pages

In Gemma's family, a tantrum is 'throwing a birkett'. This is an entertaining novel with simultaneously insightful, funny and bittersweet episodes from exaggerated characters and their preoccupations. Issues range from weddings, family, friendships, a fatal accident and the value of drama courses. They are underscored by easily recognised familiar irritations and foibles presented in fresh and lively dialogue. The humour threaded throughout the unfolding events is enhanced by its Shakespearean overtones, which create a marvellous backdrop to love, loss, blunders and redemption. Insightful observations of family rituals and misplaced societal values find their climax in the story when Gemma, as a flower girl in her sister's wedding, dressed as a swan, is finally called upon to put the birkett to good use.

Book of the Year: Younger Readers

WINNER

BATESON, Catherine

BEING BEE

University of Queensland Press

ISBN 0702235660

127 pages

Bateson strikes just the right note with her portrayal of Beatrice, called Bee. After the death of her mother, Bee must adjust to her father's new partner, Jasmine. Jazzzi doesn't seem to try to understand Bee one little bit. Bateson depicts the adjustments that must be made by all carefully and eloquently, without reverting to staid stereotypes. She cleverly uses the device of letters between Bee and her guinea pigs, Lulu and Fifi, to reveal frustrations and understandings to be aired between Bee and Jazzzi. Jazzzi has a secret: the existence of her mentally disabled brother, Harley. Nowhere is Bateson's poetry more evident than in the portrayal of his character, and the pivotal role he plays in the family becoming whole. Issues of stepparents, mental illness and death are dealt with realistically and yet with a light touch. This book will enjoy a wide readership and will touch the hearts of many.

HONOUR BOOKS

LAGUNA, Sofia

BIRD AND SUGAR BOY

Puffin, Penguin Books Australia

ISBN 0143004956

162 pages

When his best friend Sugar Boy moves interstate with his family, Bird is devastated. The consequent feeling of rejection causes him to revisit the pain of his mother's departure earlier in his life. The resulting intensity and struggle of his father's devotion becomes apparent when he takes off to the Blue Mountains and is located by the network of biker friends. Bird's obsession with *Davis's Field Guide to Birds of Australia*, along with his skill in drawing and the positive support from his science teacher, offer great hope for him. Realistic depiction of male characters who are friends rather than mates is sympathetically done by this author.

FLYNN, Pat

THE TUCKSHOP KID

Illustrated by Tom JELLETT

University of Queensland Press

ISBN 0702235679

81 pages

Being overweight and a target for bullying has been Matt's lot throughout primary school, but he has turned it to his advantage by advising kids on value for money. There is a clever plot construction with funny tuckshop menus at the beginning of each chapter. Written in the first person, this is an optimistic story about healthy eating, positive self-esteem, friendship and family relationships. Matt is a likeable character who has a way of making things happen and pulling people together. The solution is practical and achievable. The dialogue, sequence of events and Mum's reactions all work together to achieve this successful and humorous novel. Jellett's quirky black line drawings complete a satisfying read for younger readers.

SHORT LIST

FRENCH, Jackie

MACBETH AND SON

Angus & Robertson, HarperCollins Publishers Australia

ISBN 0207200343

234 pages

Jackie French asks the reader to consider whether truth matters in her wonderfully narrated story of two boys, Luke from Breakfast Creek and Lulach from 11th century Scotland. As Luke studies Shakespeare's Macbeth in school, he starts to dream of Lulach and Macbeth, and through his dreams he relives the events of history. Luke uses the whole question of Macbeth's real identity to question and resolve personal dilemmas as, like Lulach, he is dealing with a newly acquired stepfather. French's strength is in historical novels, and the extensive notes provided at the end confirm her status as a wonderful storyteller of tales from times past.

GRIFFITHS, Andy

THE CAT ON THE MAT IS FLAT

Illustrated by Terry DENTON

Pan Macmillan Australia

ISBN 033042260X

166 pages

Griffiths has created entertaining games with words that young readers will enjoy reading aloud. The book is a collection of nine illustrated stories, all equally ridiculous. Fifty years after *The Cat in the Hat* transformed texts for beginner readers, cat on mat, frog on log, duck in truck and others tumble across the pages, and the rhyming nonsense will delight emerging independent readers. The book concludes with Andy G. and Terry D. at the top of a tree sharing a pot of fresh bee tea. Combined with Terry Denton's madcap sketches, the book is rollicking good fun.

MILLARD, Glenda

LAYLA QUEEN OF HEARTS

Illustrated by Stephen Michael KING

ABC Books

ISBN 0733318428

109 pages

This short novel is a gentle story where big issues are tackled in a thoughtful way that borders on the whimsical. Layla loves being Tishkin's friend, and spends most of her time in the Kingdom of Silk, first encountered in *The Naming of Tishkin Silk*. Their dreamy, peaceful existence suits Layla perfectly, but even she knows that she can't borrow their grandmother, Nell, to take to the school's Senior Citizen's day. She finds Miss Amelie, a kindred spirit, whose isolation is not only physical. Millard ably conveys the feeling of a young girl's encounter with dementia, and her growing awareness of her own place in the community. Stephen Michael King's whimsical and expressive line drawings support and enhance the text.

Book of the Year: Early Childhood

WINNER

GLEESON, Libby

AMY & LOUIS

Illustrated by Freya BLACKWOOD

Scholastic Press, Scholastic Australia

ISBN 1865049352

unpaged

Amy and Louis are neighbours and best friends in their familiar backyards. When it's time to play, they call Coo-ee! to each other. One day though, Amy moves across the world to a new neighbourhood...is she too far away now to hear him?

Gleeson's text economically captures the essence of early childhood friendship. Her use of the old Australian bush cry is inspired. Blackwood's colours, ranging from the terracotta and muted green hues of the suburbs through to the bleak greys and blacks of the unnamed metropolis, underscore the subtext of separation and loss, and are exquisite in themselves. Linked by sequences showing the clouds bearing the message across time and space, they provide a marvellous narrative of their own. Wonderful use of perspective gives the reader both the sense of the intimacy of the friends within their created world, while also showing the vastness of the planet. One of Blackwood's strengths is in drawing children, as evidenced in last year's shortlisted *Emily's Rapunzel Hair*, and the portrayal of Amy and Louis as small important people in the wide world is successfully done. The spare text from an assured author combines beautifully with watercolours by Blackwood to create a sumptuous feast for both child listener and adult reader.

HONOUR BOOKS

COSTAIN, Meredith

DOODLEDUM DANCING

Illustrated by Pamela ALLEN

Viking, Penguin Books Australia

ISBN 0670028223

unpaged

Joyousness jumps from every page in this delightful collection of action rhymes eminently suited to four to eight year olds. Classic cheeky, pudgy, expressive Pamela Allen children vigorously demonstrate the activities needed to fully enjoy the book: each rhyme begs participation. Meredith Costain's language is irresistible, as readers are invited to stomp around with oozy, snoozy dinosaurs, love her muddly, puddly, cuddly puppy, ride along the onomatopoeic bicycle track of Merri Creek, revel in the nonsense of *The Giggle Song* and ponder why *Flies Fly*. The poetic rhythm is consistently good, while at the same time this collection explores the loves, fears and sheer delights of the target age group. Adults who share the book will be lost in the sheer fun of it all.

WILD, Margaret

CHATTERBOX

Illustrated by Deborah NILAND

Viking, Penguin Books Australia

ISBN 0670029327

unpaged

Oh the joy, oh the fun as Daisy, Max's gorgeous baby sister, is introduced on page one. Daisy's accomplishments are truly amazing: she can twiddle her toes, crawl, play with cardboard boxes, splash, build, listen and bang. But can she talk? No. Margaret Wild expertly leads the reader along the path of language acquisition with humour, repetition, prediction, and excellent placement of minimal text on the page, offset by the simple, yet highly expressive, illustrations of Deborah Niland. Max is very concerned that Daisy will never talk. Mum, Dad, Nana and Max do their utmost to get her to speak. They implore, they enlist the help of the family pets, soft toys, animals in the countryside and even the animals at the zoo. Daisy, unbeknown to everyone, has been taking it all in and then, one morning at breakfast, the family is speechless as Daisy not only repeats all she has heard, but has some well reasoned statements and questions of her own. The conclusion is hilarious. This is a book to be relished by young children and adults together.

SHORT LIST

ALLEN, Pamela

GRANDPA AND THOMAS AND THE GREEN UMBRELLA

Viking, Penguin Books Australia

ISBN 0 670 02973 4

unpaged

There is so much to do at the beach when you have a good imagination. Thomas and Grandpa are having a wonderful time and then the wind comes and their green umbrella 'flies bowling and bobbing away'. The reader explores the beach with them, and huddles under the umbrella in the storm. Pamela Allen's expressive cheerful pictures are inviting and infectious. Each page opening has the left hand page with both text and a black and white sketch of the action - depicted in full colour on the right. This has the effect of satisfactorily pacing the action for the listening and looking toddler or preschooler. Above all, this is an engaging story portraying the loving relationship between Thomas and his Grandpa, which will be related to by grandchildren everywhere.

FOX, Lee

ELLA KAZOO WILL NOT BRUSH HER HAIR

Illustrated by Cathy WILCOX

Lothian Books

ISBN 0734408560

unpaged

Compromise is rarely achieved without a tussle and so it is in this delightful verse story of a child with uncontrollable hair. As Ella's hair gets longer and wilder, the problem grows bigger. The reader is swept along with the rhythm and rhyme, and with wonderful variety of words for hair as Ella's locks gets longer and wilder. The reader will enjoy anticipating what will happen next as Ella stubbornly refuses to brush her hair and Mum doesn't know what to do: the ending will satisfy everyone. The cartoon-like illustrations fit with zany nature of the story, are fast paced to match the text, and Wilcox's use of thick paint gives the troublesome hair a life of its own.

LEE, Lyn

EIGHT

Illustrated by Kim GAMBLE

Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia

ISBN 1862914567

unpaged

Losing a favourite toy can be devastating. When Timmy loses Eight, his beloved stuffed octopus, on a picnic, Dad helps him imagine that Eight is strong enough and clever enough to know what to do on his own – and Timmy must be the same. Part of the dealing with loss involves Timmy imagining the adventures Eight might be having. This simply told story of growing up is enhanced and extended in Kim Gamble's delicate watercolour illustrations. The reader joins in with Eight's imaginary adventures, told in soft cameos evocative of a dream, and at the same time shares Timmy's loneliness. A wonderful conclusion neatly brings a happy end for both characters.

Picture Book of the Year

WINNER

TAN, Shaun

THE ARRIVAL

Lothian Books

ISBN 0734406940

unpaged

This superb creation is an amazing accomplishment of art, insight and book production. Described as a silent graphic novel, *The Arrival* tells the story of immigration through photo realistic images created with graphite pencil, encouraging the reader to absorb and empathise with the fears and threats that have compelled people around the world to travel to unknown destinations in search of a better life. Told through the eyes of one family, the husband embarks on a journey to find another home, experiencing loneliness in an almost alien world. As he meets others he experiences their stories and the reader is drawn into a narrative that explores the often impenetrable barriers of an 'alien' language and culture. His family finally joins him in a new country.

Aspects of fantasy, historical fiction, family drama, cultural reflections and reference to real places and events combine to make this a book reminiscent of the experience of various peoples throughout time, while also managing to remain a stateless 'everyman' text that transcends age levels. The impressive layers of story place the reader in a remarkable visual position to respond to both the man's plight and others' flashbacks. Size of illustration, changes in colour and background, evoke mood, determine pace and contribute to the creation of a satisfying whole. *The Arrival* has a subtext and depth that are both allegorical and symbolic as it develops the concept of migration. Ultimately, this outstanding book is a reading experience to savour. It evokes feelings through a combination of extraordinary images, design and story, and offers us all an insight into the nature of humanity.

HONOUR BOOKS

METZENTHEN, David

THE RAINBIRDS

Illustrated by Sally RIPPIN

Lothian Books

ISBN 0734408862

unpaged

This is a simple tale about the currawongs that Gleeson knows live in the distant mountains. He waits for the beautiful big black birds to leave their high homes to shelter in the city away from the stormy alpine weather. Gleeson climbs the tallest tree in the

park to wait for the birds. The book celebrates the respect due to the environment by all creatures. Metzenthén's text in red print swoops and weaves the storyline across the artwork to provide great movement, with the familiar currawong call on the final page. Rippin's skill is evident in creating illustrations which encompass collage and woodcut techniques, with the naive-style pictures in bold autumnal colours of reds, browns and oranges juxtaposed with blues, blacks, purples and greens as the seasons change. These are enhanced by the altered book techniques found throughout, and the whole rewards re-reading.

WILD, Margaret

WOOLVS IN THE SITEE

Illustrated by Anne SPUDVILAS

Viking, Penguin Books Australia

ISBN 0670041667X

unpaged

A challenging text with sinister apocalyptic overtones to test the reader, this picture book from an award-winning team probes the notions of fear, belonging and loneliness. Written in phonetic language, the theme of the outsider is crafted well in a perfect synthesis of text, story and illustrative design. With a sense of displacement that invites re-reading, it will stimulate conversation and, while starkly confronting, is told with fascinating word play, which is both haunting and eloquent. The bold black and orange cover of the book and clever use of endpapers produce a commendable and strong design feature that is both impressive and imaginative. This original and inventive book is a brave publishing venture, and it is a testament to the powerful combination of text, illustration and design that together result in an original and thought-provoking picture book.

SHORT LIST

McKIMMIE, Chris

BRIAN BANANA DUCK SUNSHINE YELLOW

Allen & Unwin

ISBN 1741147417

unpaged

Brian (known as *Banana* to Nanna, and *Duck* to Grumpy) spends the weekends with his grandparents. This experience, told from Brian's point of view, includes fascinating collage illustrations. The overall design of the book is complex and talented, including the quirky endpapers. It is an exceptional whole, with changing placement of well-designed text that collaborates with the visual images to form a complete package. What appears simplistic is actually a thoughtful exploration of relationships and our place in the world, subtly done. The valuable, realistic exposition of grandparent and grandchild interactions is authentically portrayed. This is a book that will be enjoyed by a variety of ages, and studied for its wealth of design features and collaboration of texts.

OLIVER, Narelle
HOME
Omnibus Books, Scholastic Australia
ISBN 1862916683
unpaged

Oliver's superb use of mixed media, including linocuts, digital photography and delicate painting, brings to life the story of a pair of peregrine falcons searching for a place to live after fire has destroyed their bush home. As they search for a new nest site, hunt for food and contend with the associated dangers, the artist marries rich language and inspiring illustrations to tell her thought-provoking story simply and effectively. The burnt bushland is full of rich colour, the charred cliffs and blackened trees are replaced with different shapes and colours as we accompany the pair to their rooftop home of good stones and a neat edge. This amazing book will have a wide readership. Based on a true story, with notes appended.

ORMEROD, Jan
WATER WITCHER
Little Hare Books
ISBN 1921049510
unpaged

This superb story is about the effects of drought and a family's struggle to survive on the land in outback Australia. Dougie sets out to see if he, like his grandfather before him, has the gift of water divining or 'witching'. Ormerod's exquisite use of blues and browns captures the urgency of the situation perfectly, whilst at the same time conveying a wonderful sense of the harsh struggle of the family to survive in this environment. Her dramatic change of background colour emphasizes the stunning discovery that takes place. Readers will be immediately transported to the harsh, but beautiful landscape of the Australian bush, tasting the dust, feeling the flies and sharing the emotions of all the characters.

Eve Pownall Award for Information Books

WINNER

NORMAN, Mark
THE PENGUIN BOOK: BIRDS IN SUITS

Black Dog Books
ISBN 1921167300
30 pages

This highly engaging book has excellent photographs and superb graphic design. It invites young readers in, right from the wonderful front cover photograph of three marching penguins. The layout is innovative, with clear, accessible text, cropped photographs and white space that allows the reader to focus on the important points. Each species has its own range map and helpful side chart that show its predators, feeding and breeding details as well as the penguin's size and the depths to which it swims. The book is carefully organised, with penguins grouped in families with comparative information provided at the front and back. It has a clear table of contents, index and glossary. There are outstanding maps that illustrate the information with minimal text and explanations. The chart showing the shape and size of each of the 17 species of penguin is particularly effective. This is a book that will delight anyone who opens it and delves into its pages.

HONOUR BOOKS

DAVIDSON, Leon

RED HAZE; AUSTRALIANS & NEW ZEALANDERS IN VIETNAM

Black Dog Books
ISBN 1876372958
152 pages

This well-designed book will provide a valuable resource for young people for whom the Vietnam War is ancient history. The book gains an immediacy through the inclusion of quotations and personal narratives from soldiers on both sides. It is quite extensively illustrated with photographs that provide a visual image of both the country and the conditions in which the soldiers operated. Importantly the book, while arguing that Australian and New Zealand troops were dedicated and efficient, in no way glamorises war, and the horrors of this particular conflict are made quite clear. The introduction is honest and open, and acknowledges that some people will disagree with the author's version. This is good training for children to learn to question 'truth' in history.

FENTON, Corinne

QUEENIE: ONE ELEPHANT'S STORY

Illustrated by Peter GOULDTHORPE

Black Dog Books
ISBN 1876372974
unpaged

Queenie is a superbly crafted book that elegantly recreates a period of Melbourne's history through a succinct story and evocative page design. Fenton relates the key elements in the life story of Queenie, the elephant who carried up to 500 people a day on her back around Melbourne zoo. Gouldthorpe uses sepia-coloured artwork to transport readers to a bygone era, lovingly tracing Queenie's journey "from the shadowy, hideaway places" of the Indian jungle to Australia, and into the hearts of

thousands. The muted colours of the artwork appear to seep into the page as the picture extends to the edges of the allocated space. Judges commended the tenderly told story, the attention to detail, the original approach and the convincing recreation of time and place,

SHORT LIST

HOCKNULL, Scott and COOK, Alex

AMAZING FACTS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN DINOSAURS

Illustrated by Sally ELMER, Paul LENNON, Stephen FRANCIS, Bronwen SEARLE, Laurie BEIRNE

Photographs by Gary CRANITCH and Jeff WRIGHT

Steve Parish Publishing

ISBN 1740218346

64 pages

This is a comprehensive look at the Australian prehistoric world, including material not previously published for children. Throughout the book are side panels headed 'Did you know?' that provide quirky information and additional details. The illustrations are clearly labeled and add to the reader's understanding. There is a useful timeline and a most informative glossary, as well as a fairly thorough index. The references encouraging further exploration include not only books and websites, but clubs and societies and places to visit around Australia. The overall quality and comprehensive nature of this book made it worthy of shortlisting, despite some queries concerning the accuracy of details in a few of the illustrations.

HOOPMANN, Kathy

ALL CATS HAVE ASPERGER SYNDROME

Jessica Kingsley Publishers

ISBN 1843104814

65 pages

This is an unusual, helpful, and striking way of conveying to children the characteristics of people with Asperger's Syndrome. The use of photographs of cats depersonalises the issue, while still providing recognisable aspects of the syndrome through the actions of the cats in the photographs. Sometimes humorous, sometimes touching, the accompanying brief text gives clear, straightforward explanations of how an Asperger child views the world. This book will help others, both children and adults, understand the way such children think, interact and function; it is a sympathetic and helpful exploration of difference.

TONKIN, Rachel

LEAF LITTER

Angus & Robertson, HarperCollins Publishers Australia

ISBN 0207198225

38 pages

Leaf Litter is a visual delight! Using a hard cover, folio-sized format, Tonkin provides a richly-layered graphic of the leaf litter that can be found in the Australian bush. Each page focuses on the changing environment of the bush floor, resulting from the passage of time and the changing of the seasons. Tonkin shows that the world alters as these cycles revolve, and that each movement impacts on plant and animal life within the ecosystem. Tonkin's attention to detail is astonishing. With flaps to open, and flora and fauna to spot, this book provides hours of entertainment. The glossary of terms and the list of 'Things to find', testify to the thorough research involved in its production.

* * *

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AWARDS FOUNDATION**

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