

## JUDGES' REPORT, 1984

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

DANN, M. *Bernice Knows Best* Oxford University Press  
FRANCES, H. *The Devil's Stone* Omnibus Books  
HARDING, L. *Waiting for the End of the World* Hyland House  
KLEIN, R. *Junk Castle* Oxford University Press  
KLEIN, R. *Penny Pollard's Diary* Oxford University Press  
KLEIN, R. *People Might Hear You* Penguin Australia  
SOUTHALL, I. *The Long Night Watch* Methuen  
WILLMOTT, F. *Breaking Up* William Collins  
WRIGHTSON, P. *A Little Fear* Hutchinson (Australia)

#### CLASS B—PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

ALLEN, P. *Bertie and the Bear* Nelson Australia  
COLERIDGE, A. and R. HARVEY *The Friends of Emily Calpepper*  
The Five Mile Press  
CRABTREE, J. *The Sparrow's Story at the King's Command*  
Oxford University Press  
FOX, M. and J. VIVAS *Possum Magic* Omnibus Books  
MATTINGLEY, C. and P. MULLINS *The Magic Saddle*  
Hodder and Stoughton

MORIMOTO, J. *The White Crane* William Collins  
MORRIS, J. and G. HOCKING *The Boy Who Painted the Sun*  
Penguin Australia

TREZISE, P. and D. ROUGHSEY *The Magic Firesticks*  
William Collins

The 1984 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 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. 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 were instructed to draw up a Short List of at least eight titles in Class A and Class B for immediate release.

The number of entries increased from 77 in 1983 to 100 in 1984. The increased numbers came in Classes B and C with a significant drop in Class A entries.

It is possible to make some generalizations in relation to all three classes. Poetry was represented more strongly than usual, mainly by collections of previously published poems but also, pleasingly, by new collections such as Max Fatchett's *Wry Rhymes for Troublesome Times*. It was refreshing to find humour evident in all classes. The Short Lists provide many examples of gentle, reflective humour; on the other hand titles such as Nan Hunt's *Wild and Woolly* illustrated by Noela Hills and Max Dann's *Going Bananas* are vivid examples of robust Australian humour. The interest in sharing Australia's past, evident in previous years, was again confirmed in all classes. Hesba Brinsmead's *Christinas at Longtime* evokes a nostalgia for rural Australia and provides an insight into the lives of a previous generation. Another strong theme in all classes was the relationship between young and old, giving young readers of titles such as *I Remember Georgie*, by Joan and John van Loom, a sympathetic insight into old age.

Judges were pleased with the strength of the picture-book field. Established authors and illustrators were well represented and new, promising combinations also appeared. Entries were diverse in age level, theme, setting and medium. Interesting titles include a textless picture book, Robert Roemfeldt's *A Day on the Avenue*, and Gulphil's *The Birrick*, an Abor-

iginal creation myth expressed photographically by Neil McLeod. With so many talented illustrators the future of the Australian picture-book seems assured; however, the judges felt that the quality of the texts often failed to match the merit of the illustrations, which suggests a need for firmer editorial direction.

The increase in entries suitable for consideration in Class C was gratifying in view of previous pleas made for more attention to be paid to the needs of newly independent readers. This awareness was reflected in the short chapters and otherwise appropriate format of many titles.

Design, format and overall production are considered in the judging of all entries. Two examples of elegant and adventurous production which did not fit into the categories defined in the Conditions of Entry were the Australian poetry anthology *Someone is Flying Balloons* and *Seven Little Australians*, the first Australian edition of this children's classic.

The entries in Class A included a number of non-fiction and poetry titles, a retelling and a re-issue. From the reduced number of novels it would be unwise to attempt generalizations—the Short List demonstrates the diversity of the entries. Established authors are well represented and it is pleasing to see new names among the commendations. Nostalgic themes are balanced by futuristic titles and new ground is broken in two books which explore the strength and influence of religion.

Publishers mentioned in the Short List include recognized houses as well as smaller companies willing to promote the work of newer authors and illustrators.

A number of Short Listed titles were published with the assistance of the Literature Board of the Australia Council. These include *The Boy Who Painted the Sun*, *The Devil's Stone*, *People Might Hear You*, *The Sparrow's Story at the King's Command* and *Waiting for the End of the World*.

#### CLASS A—BOOK OF THE YEAR

This year the judges had over fifteen entries, which met the criteria for Class A to consider in detail. Unanimous regret was expressed concerning the reduced number of entries in this category. Nevertheless, after the first round of judging, the panel was pleased by the range of topics, themes, styles and narrative forms which the Short List of nine titles includes.

The Short List represents an artistically mature and socially aware stage in children's literature in Australia. There is a remarkable blend of fantasy and realism in a number of the works. This reflects some of the current explorations of literature's place in our culture.

The judges noted the different narrative styles used—diary and journal provide the reader not only with a wide range of ways of reflecting on how a story can be told but also with a variety of ways of reading for meaning.

This year the topics dealt with in the Short List range from matters set in the past to the examination of possible futures. They include explorations of ageing and independence yet provide young readers with a humour which encourages reflective laughter. The power of religious groups and the bewilderment of family collapse are other matters vividly presented which may encourage the development of a mature sensitivity to others' lives.

Finally, this year's Short List is noteworthy for the fact that, though the matters, topics and narrative styles have wider significance, the works are set in Australia indicating something of the rich diversity of Australian life and experience.

#### BOOK OF THE YEAR

WRIGHTSON, P. *A Little Fear* Hutchinson (Australia)

Literature Board Award \$1,100.00

In the estimation of the judges, *A Little Fear* succeeds best in meeting the criteria for books in this class. It provides children with a story encompassing important human experiences, and in this case, experiences particularly Australian in nature. By having Mrs Tucker as the main character, the story requires that child readers consider at some length the lives of members of their community from whom they are most removed by age. In large part then the literary experience of *A Little Fear* is very much a universal one, since the thematic significance transcends barriers of age or gender.

Mrs Tucker is realistically and sympathetically portrayed. She is no super-granny nor is she senile. She is simply an old woman with definite ideas about what she wants out of what remains of her life. At this level the story is pure realism. However, Patricia Wrightson deepens her readers' involvement by introducing elements of fantasy into the plot. Mrs Tucker escapes from the conflict caused by social pressures related to old age only to find herself confronted with an antagonist who represents the ancient land Mrs Tucker hoped would be her sanctuary. The Nimbini is an archetype of resistance; a being who objects to the intrusion of Mrs Tucker. He stands for non-European ways of thinking about and responding to the environment. A trickster in essence, he devises a variety of ruses designed to drive out the interloper and protect his heritage.

The assured craftsmanship, balancing realism and fantasy, illuminates for the reader the conflicts aroused by old age and the intrusion of alien elements into the environment.

In *A Little Fear*, a novel sustained by the tautly polished style and structure, and enlivened by humour both slapstick and subtle, Wrightson has again created a distinctively Australian, yet universally comprehensible, sense of place in a timeless land swarming with life.

#### HIGHLY COMMENDED

KLEIN, R. *Penny Pollard's Diary* Oxford University Press

Literature Board Award \$900.00

This is an excellent example of book production for the independent reader. Penny's strong-minded character is revealed through the means of a diary-scrapbook, providing a stimulating vehicle for text and a mixture of illustrative techniques which mirror forms of personal writing used by many young readers.

With warm humour the book presents the fluctuating capacities for compassion and rebellion that Penny's growth to the beginning of mature independence reveals. Penny, though she rebels against the restrictions on her own life, comes to recognize the restrictions age brings to Mrs Betany, and the way in which personal identity can still be maintained.

The book provides a gently satirical commentary on obsessions such as horse mania and in so doing gives the younger reader an introduction to the power of irony. The overall effect is a moving one in which the reader is involved deeply with a vivid and entertaining persona who learns to care and to consider the other side of childhood.

The judges remarked on the format, which is consistent with the telling style. It is an exercise diary-scrapbook, a private document, rich in details, comment and illustration.

#### COMMENDED

FRANCES, H. *The Devil's Stone* Omnibus Books

Literature Board Award \$500.00

Continuity of past and present in one location is a major theme of this promising first novel by joint authors. The judges welcomed the skilful use of oral and documented history in a time shift between 1851 and 1982.

Mystery and suspense are created by a judicious blending of fantasy and realism, as characters, setting and events are woven into a complex pattern which demands an intuitive, rather than a purely intellectual, response from the reader.

The contribution of women to the settlement of Australia is well integrated and once again the literary devices of journal and diary play an integral part. Striking jacket and attractive book design are also noteworthy features.

WILLMOTT, F. *Breaking Up* Collins

Literature Board Award \$500.00

*Breaking Up* is an example of the diary mode of narration and a commendable first publication for Frank Willmott. Australia has produced relatively few realistic novels which come to grips with adolescent consciousness, and whilst the book does have an atmosphere of fatalism and futility the judges regard this as appropriate, indeed artistically necessary, for its objectives.

The range of issues *Breaking Up* covers is considerable. It pulls together a compelling number of incidents and recurring themes, schools, urban existence, families and friends, that are of vital interest to young adults. The diarist becomes, in some measure, a spokesperson for all those in the transition stage between childhood and adulthood. He is not finding the experience comfortable nor, on numerous occasions, even understandable—and this is the power of the book. Even if the diary entries are provocative at times, the overall effect is one of teenage puzzlement over life, avoiding the pitfalls of sensationalism by exuding veracity.

The judges make mention of the dust jacket illustration—a lone figure in pensive mood and pose—since it aptly prepares any reader for the book's contents.

#### CLASS B—PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

Entries for this category generally reflect the increasingly prominent place the picture book holds in the Australian book scene. Picture books comprised almost half of the total entries and display a variety of styles, techniques and media. This year's thematic emphases fall within a fairly narrow range—only a few of the entries reflect concern with present-day topics and settings or attempt a naturalistic treatment of a theme.

All the winning entries exhibit the consistent integration of illustration and text together with the attention to overall balance of design, production and printing that is the mark of a quality picture book.

The range in artistic styles and techniques in this year's entries ensures a variety of visual experiences for the readers. Some of the illustrations are "noisy" and, combined with the text, move into the vocal and musical dimensions of expression. Other illustrators create a wealth of detail which enhances and extends the story line and produces a graphic leitmotif which provides the reader with a visual as well as a textual world to explore. Also represented are styles which afford the audience a structured visual framework supporting the formal cadences of folktale and legend. Among the entries are some which, through intelligent use of media in an appropriate style, are able to interpret visually the levels of reality presented in the text.

All in all it was evident to the judges that the illustration of children's books has come of age in Australia.

#### PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR

ALLEN, P. *Bertie and the Bear* Nelson Australia

Visual Arts Board Award \$1,200.00

Pamela Allen has won the Illustrator's medal for the second consecutive year, a most unusual achievement in Australian children's literature. The simple, cumulative text, the clear colourful illustrations and the opportunities for audience participation all appeal to younger children and are used with great effect in this award-winning book.

Each character displays the action and movement appropriate to his or her sound as Bertie and the bear are chased through the pages. Colour and technique emphasize the tone and volume of the noises which are made to frighten the bear. The Queen's shouts are contained in an elongated speech balloon, the General's flute notes merge into each other in an irregular yellow line and the Captain's horn blast falls to the ground in a large dab of purple wash.

The dance is a sheer visual delight and each picture shows the bear in a new position with a changed expression as he/she cavorts in hilarious fashion. This gentle, mono-coloured sequence accentuates the change in pace after the boisterous multi-coloured chase. The ensuing sedate procession which dances after the bear is in marked contrast to the earlier urgent chase which depicts the characters in full flight with their feet off the ground. It skilfully and succinctly provides a most satisfying resolution to the story.

The excellent design is evident in the cover, the layout, the variations in print size, the incorporation of the title page into the tale, and the definition in the illustrations.

The harmonious balance of visual, textual and aural elements ensures that this book will be read and enjoyed time and again.

#### HIGHLY COMMENDED

FOX, M. *Possum Magic* Omnibus Books

Illustrated by Julie Vivas

Visual Arts Board Award \$800.00

The challenge set by Mem Fox of depicting an invisible character in a story is solved with ingenuity by Julie Vivas in *Possum Magic*. Through

judicious use of fine brushwork and colour, little invisible Hush cavorts through the visible world, letting the reader share her cloak of invisibility and the humour the situation creates. Grandma Poss strews her magic in a lovely swoop of stars and colour from her magic apron and cushions old paws in sneakers. The soft colours of the Australian bush and the animal folk who inhabit it are faithfully represented, with that added touch of liveliness that gives the illustrations humorous lift and the animals a unique personality. The people, as they should in a book such as this, all look more or less alike, and it is the animals, their prancing paws, their textured pelts, their round eyes and their soft bottoms, that steal the show, and the food.

#### COMMENDED

1. MORIMOTO, J. *The White Crane* Collins

Visual Arts Board Award \$600.00

*The White Crane* is a striking production based on a traditional folk tale. The straightforward and well-paced telling is suited to the oral presentation appropriate to myth.

The illustrations have a simplicity which harmonizes well with the text. The bold use of line, suggestive of Japanese woodcuts, is a strong element in the book's visual appeal. Colour is generally skilfully used to reflect mood which is further reinforced by the media chosen: yellow adds warmth in one scene while in another, the pinks and reds match the passion of Otsuru's transformation from a young girl to the white crane. The composition of some illustrations is particularly strong and it is enhanced by the white background. The arrangement of the lines of text into phrase units, their placement on the page in relation to the illustrations and the selection of print size indicate that each double page has been conceived as a complete unit. The brilliant red endpapers and the cover itself also contribute to the book's design and aesthetic appeal.

2. COLERIDGE, A.

*The Friends of Emily Culpepper* The Five Mile Press

Illustrated by Roland Harvey

Visual Arts Board Award \$400.00

This book is a commendable example of a spare text providing a solid framework upon which flourishes a rich visual narrative. The fine lines and gentle washes of colour enhance the whimsical quality of Ann Coleridge's story as well as enabling Roland Harvey to introduce the quantity of detail which is needed to expand the narrative and provide visual comment. The use of the double-page spread ensures that the story moves along smoothly, with the style of the text integrated with the illustrations. It is mainly through the illustrations that the whimsical magic quality of the solitary old woman who has her small enjoyments and her few friends is made apparent and the humour in the final trade-off between Emily and the community is plainly observable.

#### CLASS C—JUNIOR BOOK OF THE YEAR

Books that successfully bridge the gap between picture book and longer novel are vitally important in encouraging and sustaining children's enjoyment of books and reading.

In this third year of the Junior Book of the Year Award it was pleasing to have a larger field to choose from than in previous years. The titles

considered were almost equally divided between picture story books with substantial texts and fiction titles that by virtue of style, format and subject were eligible for this category.

The entries showed a considerable range of subject matter and approach. Picture books included the traditional folk tale style of *The Sparrow's Story*, the gentle fantasy of *The Magic Saddle* and the realistic humour of Ronda Armitage's *One Moonlit Night*. Fiction titles were predominantly realistic and showed a commendable mixture of humour and seriousness. It is encouraging to see subjects such as old age, independence, and imagination being explored for this reading level in titles such as *Penny Pollard's Diary*, *Ted Greenwood's Marley and Friends* and *Junk Castle*.

#### JUNIOR BOOK OF THE YEAR

DANN, M. *Bernice Knows Best* Oxford University Press

Illustrated by Ann James

Literature Board Award \$500.00

This entertaining and lively story has much that will appeal to younger independent readers. The episodic plot is simple and fast-moving with two very real and appealing main characters in disaster-prone Hugh and trouble-shooter Bernice, his friend and mentor.

The slapstick humour of the absurd situation is kept firmly in control with the elements of exaggeration being well sustained throughout the story. The conversational style of the narrative is exactly matched by the deceptively casual exuberant line drawings which extend the text to add their own visual comments.

The overall design of the book is pleasing. Illustrations and text are well integrated and the bright covers and colourful endpapers appropriately convey the lively humour of the story.

A medal has been awarded to both author and illustrator. In addition, this year funding for Class C has been made available.

### AN APOLOGY

Due to our commitment to articles about Children's Book Week we are unable to include the second half of the Phaedrus article. We promise to include it in the October issue.

Lauren Harman