

Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction in Children's Literature

Charge: To select the recipient of the annual [Orbis Pictus Award](#) for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children and up to five honor books; to propose a session on nonfiction books for children and plan a session featuring the award winning author at NCTE's [Annual Convention](#); and to promote the use of nonfiction children's books in the classroom.

The outgoing and incoming committee chairs are grateful for the continued support by the NCTE Staff members, Debbie Zagorski and Linda Walters-Moore.

Major activities: What major actions, projects, initiatives, or studies in your charge have been completed by your group since July 1, 2014?

There have been a number of activities that have occurred since July 1, 2014. The Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction Committee read, discussed, and selected the winner, honor books, and recommended books from those published in 2013. The reviews of these books appeared in the November 2014 issue of *Language Arts* and were presented during a session at the national conference in National Harbor, Maryland. The authors and illustrators of the winner and honor books were also acknowledged during the children's literature luncheon on Saturday during the conference. Immediately following this luncheon, a panel that included Jen Bryant, Brian Floca, Susan Roth, Melissa Sweet, and Cindy Trumbore.

The books presented at the 2014 conference were as follows:

Winner of the 2014 Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction

A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin by Jen Bryant; illustrated by Melissa Sweet (Knopf)

Honor Books:

Locomotive by Brian Floca (Atheneum Books for Young Readers)

The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdos by Deborah Heiligman, illustrated by LeUyen Pham (Roaring Brook Press)

Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 by Michelle Markel, illustrated by Melissa Sweet (Balzer + Bray)

Parrots Over Puerto Rico by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore (Lee & Low Books Inc.)

Courage Has No Color: The True Story of the Triple Nickles, America's First Black Paratroopers by Tanya Lee Stone (Candlewick Press)

Recommended Books:

Emancipation Proclamation: Lincoln and the Dawn of Liberty by Tonya Bolden (Abrams Books for Young Readers)

Becoming Ben Franklin: How a Candle-Maker's Son Helped Light the Flame of Liberty by Russell Freedman (Holiday House)

The Mad Potter: George E. Ohr Eccentric Genius by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan (Roaring Brook Press)

Thomas Jefferson Builds a Library by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by John O'Brien (Calkins Creek)

Eruption! Volcanoes and the Science of Saving Lives by Elizabeth Rusch, photographs by Tom Uhlman (Houghton Mifflin Books for Children)

Lifetime: The Amazing Numbers in Animal Lives by Lola M. Schaefer, illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal (Chronicle Books)

Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors? The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell by Tanya Lee Stone, illustrated by Marjorie Priceman (Henry Holt and Company)

Scaly, Spotted, Feathered, Filled: How Do We Know What Dinosaurs Really Looked Like? by Catherine Thimmesh (Houghton Mifflin Books for Children)

The selection criteria was applied to all books listed above in order to find the truly outstanding nonfiction books published for children during the preceding year.

In January 2015, following numerous rounds of online discussions and preliminary voting, the list of books in consideration for the awards was reduced to approximately 40 titles. During a lengthy conference call with all committee members participating, the winner, honor, and recommended books were selected. The results were provided to Debbie Zagorski and she generated a press release that was posted on the NCTE website. The committee members then wrote their book reviews for *Language Arts*.

Recipients of the 2105 Orbis Pictus Awards were as follows:

2015 Orbis Pictus Award winner

The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion & the Fall of Imperial Russia by Candace Fleming (Schwartz & Wade)

Honor Books

A Home for Mr. Emerson by Barbara Kerley, illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham (Scholastic Press)

Mr. Ferris and His Wheel by Kathryn Gibbs Davis, illustrated by Gilbert Ford (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus by Jen Bryant, illustrated by Melissa Sweet (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers)

Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation by Duncan Tonatiuh (Abrams Books for Young Readers)

Star Stuff: Carl Sagan and the Mysteries of the Cosmos by Stephanie Roth Sisson (Roaring Brook Press)

Recommended Books

Eye to Eye: How Animals See the World by Steve Jenkins (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Chasing Cheetahs: The Race to Save Africa's Fastest Cats by Sy Montgomery, photographs by Nic Bishop (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

The Girl from the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement by Teri Kanefield (Abrams Books for Young Readers)

Little Melba and Her Big Trombone by Kathryn Russell-Brown, illustrated by Frank Morrison (Lee & Low Books)

Neighborhood Sharks: Hunting with the Great Whites of California's Farallon Islands by Katherine Roy (David Macaulay Studio/Roaring Brook Press)

The Scraps Book: Notes from a Colorful Life by Lois Ehlert (Beach Lane Books)

The Streak: How Joe DiMaggio Became America's Hero by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Terry Widener (Calkins Creek)

Strike!: The Farm Workers' Fight for Their Rights by Larry Dane Brimner (Calkins Creek)

Two committee members, Joyce Herbeck and Ed Sullivan completed their tenure on the committee, but will present the 2015 winners during the NCTE conference this year. Two new committee members were added, Scott Riley, a teacher in Singapore American School and Mary Ann Cappiello from Lesley University.

What actions, projects, initiatives, or studies are "in progress" at this time? What have you accomplished so far, and what is your timeline for future work?

Fran Wilson rotated off of the committee and Cyndi Giorgis assumed the role of chair.

The Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction committee continues to strive to bring more attention to the award. During the 2015 NCTE conference in Minneapolis, the Children's Book Award luncheon, recently revised and renamed, will have as its two speakers, Candace Fleming and Ann Martin, authors of the 2015 Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction and the Charlotte Huck Award respectively. This will certainly elevate the awards and bring new recognition for them.

Over the past 10 months, the current committee members have been reading, discussing, and reducing the number of titles submitted in consideration for the 2016 award. At the 2015 NCTE conference, the committee will select the new winner, honor books, and recommended books during a one day intense meeting. These 2016 award recipients will be revealed at the conclusion of the Children's Book Award luncheon. This will be an exciting event and one that is sure to generate a lot of buzz and, hopefully, reading.

Our proposal for an electronic book, ***A Perfect Partnership: Orbis Pictus Award Winning Books, Instructional Strategies, and the Common Core State Standards*** that was submitted to Kurt Austin in August 2014 has been approved and accepted. The three co-authors will include Cyndi Giorgis, Fran Wilson, and Marie LeJeune. This book will focus on past and current winners of the Orbis Pictus Award while aligning classroom strategies with the Common Core State Standards. We will request current and past committee members to be contributors to this book as well. In addition, a request will be submitted to NCTE to have a link to the book reviews published in *Language Arts* posted on the Orbis Pictus website. The projected completion date for the manuscript is December 2016.

Council priorities: The NCTE Executive Committee guides NCTE focuses through establishing goals and priorities and through initiating projects. Please write about how your group contributes to and/or benefits from a current emphasis on the following: (1) capacity building for literacy learning, (2) educator leadership in school, district, and institutional decision making (3) authentic assessment, and (4) advocacy based on NCTE goals and knowledge at the local, state, and federal levels.

How does your group's work relate to each of these four emphases?

Orbis Pictus Chair, Cyndi Giorgis, has been invited to speak at a conference in June related to nonfiction and Orbis Pictus books. This is in addition to the presentations at local, state, and national conferences that past and current committee members provide in order to recommend high quality nonfiction titles as well as instructional ideas for their use in the classroom to teachers, librarians, and parents. The integration of nonfiction into literacy programs at all grade levels continues to be a challenge and an issue, especially with the adoption of the English Language Arts Common Core Standards by the majority of the states. The Orbis Pictus Award Committee can support teachers by providing guidelines for the selection of quality nonfiction books as well as by providing instructional ideas for using nonfiction books in the classroom to address academic standards. The committee will continue to explore additional ways to assist teachers and hopes to do this through some possible future publications. This certainly supports the capacity for literacy learning as one of NCTE priorities.

Cyndi Giorgis, Chair