

Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction in Children's Literature Committee

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.

What major actions or projects have been completed by your group since July 1, 2008?

Since July 2008 the committee has announced the winner, honor, and recommended books of the 2008 collection of books in the article of reviews for *Language Arts* and at the national conference in 2008, during which the committee acknowledged a number of authors and illustrators during the children's literature luncheon. Tonya Bolden, John Fleischman, and Ann Bausam were honored. Later the authors participated in a round table of author discussion about writing and illustrating books for young readers. The committee's selection of the 2008 collection was intensive and challenging because of the number of excellent and varied books published for young readers. Features and content are diverse and sometimes controversial; new forms such as the memoir and first-person biography, as well as superb photographs and design continue to renew, expand and invigorate the genre. The concerns about sources and documentation in books for the youngest readers continues to be part of committee discussions, as does the inclusion of poetry or multi-media supplements, genres which are not eligible for the Orbis Pictus award.

The books presented at the 2008 conference, whose authors were honored, are as follows:

Winner of the 2008 Orbis Pictus Award

- Tonya Bolden. *MLK: The Journey of a King*. Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Honor Books for 2008

- Nic Bishop. *Nic Bishop Spiders*. Scholastic Nonfiction,
- Ann Bausam. *Muckrakers: How Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and Lincoln Steffens Helped Expose Scandal, Inspire Reform, and Invent Investigative Journalism*. National Geographic.
- John Fleischman. *Black and White Airmen: Their True History*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Marilyn Singer. *Venom*. Darby Creek Press.
- George Sullivan. *Helen Keller: Her Life in Pictures*. Scholastic Press.

Recommended Books for 2008

- Loree Griffin Burns. *Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Steve Jenkins. *Living Color*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Sheila Keenan. *Animals in the House: A History of Pets and People*, Scholastic Press.
- Katherine Kirkpatrick. *The Snow Baby: The Arctic childhood of Admiral Robert E. Peary's Daring Daughter*. Holiday House.
- Cris Peterson. *Clarabelle: Making Milk and So Much More*. Boyds Mills Press.
- Bob Raczka. *3-D ABC A Sculptural Alphabet*. Millbrook Press.
- Peter Sis. *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

The 2009 committee selected the winning, honor, and recommended books and submitted a review article to *Language Arts*. The completion of voting for the 2009 award occurred at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. The 2009 collection will be presented at the November conference in Philadelphia.

The following books have been selected for the 2009 collection:

Winner of the 2009 Orbis Pictus Award

- *Amelia Earhart: The Legend of the Lost Aviator* by Shelley Tanaka (Abrams Books for Young Readers)

Honor Books for 2009

- *George Washington Carver* by Tonya Bolden (Abrams Books for Young Readers)
- *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary* by Candace Fleming (Schwartz & Wade Books)
- *Washington at Valley Forge* by Russell Freedman (Holiday House)
- *We are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball* by Kadir Nelson (Hyperion Books for Children)
- *When the Wolves Returned: Restoring Nature's Balance in Yellowstone* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, illustrated by Dan and Cassie Hartman (Walker Books for Young Readers).

Recommended Books for 2009

- *A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams* by Jen Bryant (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers)
- *A Boy Named Beckoning: The True Story of Dr. Carlos Montezuma, Native American Hero* by Gina Capaldi (Carolrhoda Books)
- *The Trouble Begins at 8: A Life of Mark Twain in the Wild, Wild West* by Sid Fleischman (Greenwillow Books)
- *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Through the Gates and Beyond* by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan (Roaring Brook Press)
- *Ice Bears* by Brenda Z. Guiberson (Henry Holt & Co.);
- *Sisters and Brothers: Sibling Relationships in the Animal World* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page (Houghton Mifflin Books for Children)
- *In Defiance of Hitler: The Secret Mission of Varian Fry* by Carla Killough McClafferty (Farrar Straus and Giroux)
- *Lincoln through the Lens: How Photography Revealed and Shaped an Extraordinary Life* by Martin W. Sandler (Walker Books for Young Readers)

What projects, initiatives, or studies are "in progress" at this time?

At the November, 2008, conference, during the committee meeting, members continued their discussion of parts of the bylaws that needed attention, some aspects more technical, such as the timing of the announcement of the award at the conference, which, under the existing by-laws is at the spring conference. Certain parts of the by-laws are obsolete. Other parts of the by-laws, such as the list of books that are eligible for the award, has raised questions among members. The updating of the by-laws is an ongoing project. We anticipate that at the 2009 meeting in Philadelphia, the committee will finalize the revisions and present the by-laws to the NCTE Executive Committee.

The period since June 2008 saw the annual change in the committee. Two members, Carol Avery and Terrell Young rotated off of the committee; they are no longer involved in book selection, but they will be part of the presentation of the 2009 books at the annual convention. Two new members joined the committee, Jan Kristo and Barbara Chatton. Continuing members of the committee are Mingshui Cai, Jeffrey Kaplan, Diana Porter, and Fran Wilson. The members are reviewing books published in 2009 in consideration for the 2010 award selection. The members of the committee reflect a range of professional experience, regional representation, gender and diversity, and expertise with children's

nonfiction literature. At the time of this report the committee will host three authors during the author presentation at the fall conference in Philadelphia.

As part of our charge to promote the use of non-fiction children's books in the classroom, committee members have taken it upon themselves to publicize the Orbis Pictus Award through presentations at local, state, and national conferences throughout the year. Presentations have been made at regional IRA conferences, meetings of NCTE state affiliates, librarians' conferences, and local district meetings. These presentations have been well received, and plans are underway to continue this effort during 2009-2010.

Strategic Governance: Over the past few years, the NCTE Executive Committee has established outcomes and priorities relating to these key topics in our field: Multimodal Literacy and Technology, Research and Teaching, English Language Learners, Professional Development, Closing the Achievement Gap, Reading Research, 21st Century Literacies, Meeting the Needs of Audiences Currently Unserved/Underserved by NCTE, Attracting, Supporting, and Advancing Early Career Educators, and International Involvement, "Global English", and NCTE. Does your group have research findings or suggestions to contribute that are relevant to on-going work on these strategic governance topics?

While presenting at conferences, members of the committee have discovered that teachers and librarians are hungry for professional development that speaks directly to classroom delivery of content. The integration of non-fiction into literacy programs at any grade level continues to be a challenge and an issue, especially as high stakes testing increases focus on interpretation of text and graphics based on non-fiction selections. Educators who work within the constraints of mandated programs want to supplement their texts. The Orbis Pictus Award Committee can provide ideas for selection of books, themes to consider in connecting them, and enhanced instruction in sharing books to help young readers become more astute in their reading of the genre. Teachers need the affirmation to supplement their programs with current literature, and they need more information and ideas about sharing the books with young readers.

As a new committee chair, I am grateful for the leadership and support provided by the outgoing chair, Sandip Wilson, and the NCTE staff members, Debbie Zagorski and Linda Walters, who provided encouragement, information, and patience as I settled into this position. This annual report follows the model provided by the 2008 annual report; many passages are taken from that report, written by Sandip Wilson.

Kim Ford, Chair