

THE CHARLIE MAY SIMON CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD

PROCEDURES FOR COMPILING THE READING LIST AND FOR VOTING TO DETERMINE THE WINNER (Revised 9/2012)

The Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award was originally sponsored by the Arkansas Elementary School Council, an advisory group to the State Department of Education, and twenty-four other organizations and institutions. The current cooperating groups are: Arkansas Department of Education, University of Central Arkansas, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Arkansas State University, Henderson State University, Arkansas Tech University, Arkansas Association of University Women, Arkansas Council of Teachers of English, Arkansas Association of Elementary School Principals, Arkansas Parent Teachers Association, Arkansas Association of Childhood Education International, Arkansas Library Association-Public Library Division, Arkansas State Library, Arkansas Reading Association, Arkansas Association of School Librarians, Hendrix College, Harding University, Arkansas Association of Instructional Media, Arkansas Education Association, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and Ouachita Baptist University.

Policies and procedures for the award were adopted by the Arkansas Elementary School Council. The policies were generally suggested by its Book Award and Library Committee. Each of the cooperating agencies appoints someone to serve on the reading committee for the award. Additionally, five at-large members (classroom teachers, reading specialists, and/or library media specialists) will be included, representing various areas of the state.

Reading committee members are appointed or selected to a three-year term. Reappointments are made at the discretion of the agency or institution. The committee is charged with the responsibility of reading and evaluating books to be nominated for the Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award.

The preliminary reading list is developed by the representative of the Arkansas State Library, using standard reviewing sources. Copies are obtained of all available books that have been published two years previous to the time the master list is due and are appropriate for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. These copies are briefly examined to determine if: (1) the publishing date qualifies, (2) the author resides in the continental United States, and (3) the subject matter is appropriate. Committee members may propose additional titles that meet the criteria. Participating schools are encouraged to suggest titles for consideration which also meet the criteria. The chair is responsible for securing examination copies of these titles from the publisher. The initial preliminary reading list is limitless and may exceed 200 titles.

The chair distributes copies of the preliminary reading list. Books are made available to committee members by the chair (through sample copies supplied to Committee Chairman by book publishers), the Arkansas State Library, (through sample copies supplied to State Library), local public libraries, and through interlibrary loan. Books acquired for reading by the committee members must be shared and returned for other committee members to read during the year. A preliminary reading list is available to anyone, upon request, from the book selection committee chair.

Books are selected to be read by fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. The committee tries to select books which the children will read on their own. Books whose chief value would be in relation to the formal school curriculum are excluded. Most of the titles selected are fiction, but biography and poetry are usually included. The appropriate criteria for the area are applied. Each book is judged as a “whole”. Books which children would read anyway are usually not included on the list.

It is hoped the children will discuss the books that they have read and as a result will become more thoughtful readers. The list always includes some easy selections as well as some which are more advanced in order to make the reading attractive to children in grades four through six. No child is expected to read all of the books on the list. Some of the titles will be selected by teachers for reading aloud. Any book to be read aloud by the teacher should be read previously to determine its appropriateness for that particular group.

The committee meets five times a year to discuss the titles on the preliminary list. If a member cannot attend a meeting, he/she may submit votes to the chairperson prior to the scheduled meeting.

Following the last meeting, the chair distributes a ballot of the remaining books on the list to the committee members. Committee members cast a written vote for the books they would like to be placed on the master reading list. A book must receive a majority vote by the committee members before it is placed on the list. Members are not to vote for the books they have not read. After the votes have been tabulated, the master reading list is made available to principals and school librarians in March by the Department of Education, approximately a year prior to student voting. Before the final list is distributed to principals and school librarians, copies are sent to Charlie May Simon Reading Committee members.

VOTING PROCEDURE

In March, a sample ballot form containing the titles on the master reading list is made available by the Department of Education to all elementary and middle school principals and/or librarians in the state. The ballot form is reproduced by the school and used by the child to vote. Only students in grades four through six, who have read or have heard read at least three of the titles on the list, are eligible to vote. Votes are tabulated at the school

and submitted to the Department of Education. The tabulation form shows the vote each title on the list received at the school. Voting takes place in late March or early April.

The official announcement of the winner and the runners-up is made by the Arkansas State Library and the Department of Education. This information is made available on the ADE web site to all elementary and middle school principals and/or librarians in the state. Also included with this announcement is the master reading list of titles nominated for the following year's award.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE CHARLIE MAY SIMON READING COMMITTEE

Books are selected to be enjoyed by fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. The committee strives to select books which students will read for their own pleasure, information, and /or inspiration—not books chiefly related to formal school curriculum. Each book is judged as a “whole”.

Titles representative of different types of literature are included. Most are fiction, but biography and poetry may also appear. The reading level ranges from easy to advanced in order to make reading attractive for all students in grades four through six.

Fiction

- What is the intent of the author? (This is usually seen in relation to the theme of the book.)
- What is the effect on the reader?
- Is the plot well-constructed and appropriate for the age group?
- How are the characters portrayed? Do they act with valid psychology?
- If the setting is significant to the story, is it accurately and clearly portrayed?
- Is the style of writing appropriate for age group and satisfactory in quality?

Non-fiction

- Will the book be read by a student on his/her own initiative? (Teacher or library media specialist may need to introduce the book.)
- Is the subject matter authoritative?
- Is the style of writing appropriate for age group and satisfactory in quality?
- What is the purpose of the book?
- How is the book valuable—for information, for pleasure, for inspiration?
- What is the effect on the reader?

Guidelines Made by the Book Award Committee

- Authors outside the continental United States will not be considered; authors have to reside in the United States. However, authors who live part time in the United States

can still be considered. Dual authors will be considered as long as one lives in the United States.

- Adaptations, translations and retellings will not be considered.
- Books must have copyright dates consistent with the year for which books are being selected (two years before the date of the master list; for example, 2010 for master list 2012-2013). However, if there is a text and/or print copyright date previous to the publishing date, the publishing date is the key factor for inclusion on initial list. In other words, books can be copyrighted before date of publishing.
- Books previously published in foreign countries will not be considered.
- Books with dual authors will be considered for inclusion on the list. If one author is deceased, the book will still be considered.
- Caldecott and Newbery Award winners may be considered.
- Deceased author's books will not be considered.
- Collections of short stories by a single author will be considered; however, collections by multiple authors will not be considered.
- Collections of folk tales will not be considered.
- When considering the "book as a whole", as our guidelines suggest, several items may be considered. What is the effect on the reader? Is the style of writing appropriate for the age group and satisfactory in quality? These questions could at some point get into how characters are portrayed (questions about behavior) and of language (slang terms). But, ultimately, the book is considered as a "whole".

Reading Committee's Discussion and Voting

- There is encouragement of discussion by any committee member of all books on the reading list or other suggested books for the list.
- At any book discussion meeting, votes can be cast and recorded for any book read.
- If a book in discussion only receives negative votes and has three negative votes with no positive votes, the book is removed from the list.
- If a book in discussion receives a mixture of positive and negative votes, the book remains on the list.
- In reconsideration of a book, a reading committee member who presents a strong defense for the book can have it reconsidered when three people are present who have read it. The book may be re-entered to the list by a majority vote of those present.
- Beginning with the December CMS Reading Committee meeting and for the last two sessions in January and February, books must have three or more negative votes than positive votes to be removed from the list.
- Final voting will take place at the February meeting by written ballot. Reading members not present can send reports to the committee session on how they would vote on specific books.
- In order to vote at the February meetings, a member must have attended at least two meetings and/or sent in two reports on books read.
- Guidelines for the book award may be reviewed annually, if necessary.