



UKLA Children's Book Award 2011

Criteria

The award is given every year for books in which the language is powerful. Language can be used in many ways when telling a story, giving information or even when adding meaning to picture books. Sometimes it is the effect of the use of language which remains with us well after we have read the story or book. This award seeks specifically to honour those writers whose use of language engages the young reader in just such a way.

Language can be funny, expressive, descriptive, serious, explanatory, stark, telegraphic, observational but most of all it should be powerful. It must have an effect on the child reader and be memorable in some way because of the way it is used.

The current award seeks to recognise the use of language in a fiction, non-fiction or picture book from those books nominated by some key publishers in children's books.

The specific qualities will be unique to each book; however judges should pay regard to the following statements in making the award:

Fiction

A key criterion for the fiction award is that the book should have something interesting to say and that it should communicate its themes in interesting ways. The book will be well-crafted not only at plot level but also with regard to narration, style, dialogue and lexical choices. The language may be poetic, humorous, descriptive, challenging or appropriately straight forward and it does not need to draw attention to itself in order to be deemed powerful. Specifically the award will be given for a book that the judges deem to use language in ways that enhance the storytelling.

Picture Books

Picture books convey their meanings through the language of pictures, textual language and the interaction between the two. The award for picture book should take account of the relationship between image and word and the readerly gaps that are presented by this interplay. Due regard should be given to the reading experience for the child and while the language should be appropriate for the intended age group, it should not be condescending. The language might be playful or solemn, it may have memorable qualities, it might be patterned, the register might be formal or informal but the award will be given to a picture book that judges feel that young readers will want to revisit over and over again.

Non-Fiction

The award is presented to creative non-fiction which emanates from the writer's passion about a subject rather than an obvious curriculum objective. It may capture the reader's interest by using elements that are familiar in fiction: drama, tension, storytelling, character, description. It will have a clear authorial voice which will engage the reader and help them negotiate the context without being patronising. In judging the non-fiction award, account should be taken of the aesthetic reading experience and whether the submitted title is one that a child would read for pleasure as well as for information.