



Newbery Terms, Definitions, and Criteria

These Newbery terms, definitions, and criteria are taken from the October 2009 Newbery Award Manual, which is the most current version of the guide. The award manual is a fluid document that is under constant review based on the continual changes that occur in children’s book publishing. The most up-to-date version can always be found on the [ALSC Web site](#).

Terms

1. The Medal shall be awarded annually to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published by an American publisher in the United States in English during the preceding year. There are no limitations as to the character of the book considered except that it be original work. Honor books may be named. These shall be books that are also truly distinguished.
2. The award is restricted to authors who are citizens or residents of the United States.
3. The committee in its deliberations is to consider only the books eligible for the award, as specified in the terms.

Definitions

1. “Contribution to American literature” indicates the text of a book. It also implies that the committee shall consider all forms of writing—fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Reprints, compilations, and abridgements are not eligible.
2. A “contribution to American literature for children” shall be a book for which children are an intended potential audience. The book displays respect for children’s understandings, abilities, and appreciations. “Children” is defined as persons of ages up to and including fourteen, and books for this entire age range are to be considered.
3. “Distinguished” is defined as:
 - Marked by eminence and distinction; noted for significant achievement.
 - Marked by excellence in quality.
 - Marked by conspicuous excellence or eminence.
 - Individually distinct.
4. “Author” may include co-authors. The author(s) may be awarded the medal posthumously.
5. The term “original work” may have several meanings. For purposes of these awards, it is defined as follows:
 - “Original work” means that the text was created by this writer and no one else. It may include original retellings of traditional literature, provided the words are the author’s own.
 - Further, “original work” means that the text is presented here for the first time and has not been previously published elsewhere in this or any other form. Text reprinted or compiled from other sources are not eligible. Abridgements are not eligible.
6. “In English” means that the committee considers only books written and published in English. This requirement DOES NOT limit the use of words or phrases in another language where appropriate in context.
7. “American literature published in the United States” means that books first published in previous years in other countries are not eligible. Books published simultaneously in the United States and another country may be eligible. Books published in a U.S. territory or commonwealth are eligible.
8. “Published . . . in the preceding year” means that the book has a publication date in that year, was available for purchase in that year, and has a copyright date no later than that year. A book might have a copyright date prior to the year under consideration but, for various reasons, was not published until the year under consideration. If a book is published prior to its year of copyright as stated in the book, it shall be considered

in its year of copyright as stated in the book. The intent of the definition is that every book be eligible for consideration, but that no book be considered in more than one year.

9. “Resident” specifies that the author has established and maintains a residence in the United States, U.S. territory, or U.S. commonwealth as distinct from being a casual or occasional visitor.
10. The term, “only the books eligible for the award,” specifies that the committee is not to consider the entire body of the work by an author or whether the author has previously won the award. The committee’s decision is to be made following deliberation about the books of the specified calendar year.

Criteria

1. In identifying “distinguished contribution to American literature,” defined as text, in a book for children,
 - a. Committee members need to consider the following:
 - Interpretation of the theme or concept
 - Presentation of information including accuracy, clarity, and organization
 - Development of a plot
 - Delineation of characters
 - Delineation of a setting
 - Appropriateness of style
 - b. Committee members must consider excellence of presentation for a child audience.

Note: Because the literary qualities to be considered will vary depending on content, the committee need not expect to find excellence in each of the named elements. The book should, however, have distinguished qualities in all of the elements pertinent to it.

2. Each book is to be considered as a contribution to American literature. The committee is to make its decision primarily on the text. Other components of a book, such as illustrations, overall design of the book, etc., may be considered when they make the book less effective.
3. The book must be a self-contained entity, not dependent on other media (i.e., sound or film equipment) for its enjoyment.

Note: The committee should keep in mind that the award is for literary quality and quality presentation for children. The award is not for didactic content or popularity.

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