

The 100 Year Anniversary of the Newbery Book Award  
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The Newbery Medal is awarded annually to the author of the most distinguished contribution of American Literature for children. In the year 2022, we will celebrate the 100-year anniversary of this highly acclaimed designation for excellence in children's books.

This commemoration celebrates a century of captivating books. Of course, our world has changed in the 100 years since its inception, but the longevity and evolution of this award is a fascinating journey.

On June 21, 1921, Frederic G. Melcher, editor of Publishers Weekly, proposed the award to the ALA (American Library Association) and recommended the award be named after an English bookseller and publisher of juvenile books, John Newbery. This award has become extremely significant; it can change the life of the author, and has the potential to change the life of a young reader.

Will librarians, bookstore owners, and teachers be gearing up for this book lover's anniversary celebration in June of 2022? Already available online, are 100-year anniversary celebration Newbery t-shirts, hoodies and stickers. Passionate Newbery book lovers are out there! After all, what a wonderful way to travel, find adventure, meet new people, and discover curious insights by reading a prestigious award-winning book.

Children of all ages can develop a passion for a good story. This is more important today as we live amidst a mega-technology era. The number of children's books available can be overwhelming for parents, grandparents and teachers and the Newbery Award designation can be helpful in making choices in providing a quality book of children's literature.

I may be more excited than most about this 100-year anniversary as our family has a Newbery Medal and Honor book collection. It is not complete by any means, but it is on its way. Even though my immediate family lives in five different states, we work on collecting the books and Newbery discussions are a frequent topic of family gatherings. This fun family project has been in existence for four years. You will see Newbery spreadsheets downloaded, short book reports posted, and photos of books from thrift stores with the text "Do you have this one"? Oftentimes discussions center around the latest Newbery book someone has read and would we recommend it to one of our young family members.

There are those of us that love lists and that is why we developed a website dedicated to "Everything Newbery" at [Newberybooks.com](http://Newberybooks.com). This extensive website is devoted to Newbery award books, and can be motivational for readers, collectors, teachers, librarians, and book club organizers. [Newberybooks.com](http://Newberybooks.com) has several different Newbery

Award lists mapped out for you. You can sort through the books based on your interest or need. There are 100 Newbery winners and over 300 Honor book awards.

On the book cover of a Newbery Medal winner, you will see a gold circular stamp with the words “John Newbery Medal.” Don’t confuse this award with the Caldecott Award, as both have gold stamps. The Newbery Medal award is for the story and literary content whereas the Caldecott Award is for the book’s artist’s illustrations.

If an author is a runner up of the Newbery Award, they receive an award called the “Newbery Honor Book” and a silver circular stamp is affixed to the book cover. There are hundreds of Honor books because 1 to 8 runner ups are chosen each year along with the Newbery Medal winner. The ALSC (Association of Library Service to Children) committee members identify the best of the best. Kirby McCurtis, president of ALSC, says the committee works hard at finding these books. This award is not merely for the most popular book. Instead, they recognize books that are the most distinguished with regards to the focus of the award.

**Criteria for Newbery Award submission:**

Author must be a US citizen or live in the USA

Book must be published the year preceding the award

All works must be original, no reprints or compilations

Books geared for children and young adults up to the age of 14 is the intended age bracket

Must be published in the English language and not be dependent of other media such as sound or movie

Must have distinguished characters, plot, setting, theme and style

Each January, when the Newbery Medal and Honor books are named, bookstores know that book may quickly sell out. Libraries may need to put the book on back order and online wait lists will start to stack up.

Which Newbery sold the most books? Are any Newbery Medal winners out of print? Are first editions valuable? Are older books difficult to find? It is a fun and fascinating project to research. You will find statistics and data you never knew existed. Example: The Newbery winner in 1961, “The Island of the Blue Dolphin” sold 6.5 million books and was made into a movie. Author, Scott O’Dell was extremely successful and went on to win three more Newbery awards. He started his own children’s book award (called the Scott O’Dell book award) which specializes in children’s historical fiction.

Children’s minds are tender and impressionable and those that choose books may be quite serious with this responsibility. Some Newbery books I found to be too scary or sorrowful for a child I know, or it may be more appropriate for an older child. Some Newbery books I recommend for my adult friend’s book clubs because the books are memorable, beautifully written, and what I would consider a classic.

The ALSC offers a continuing education course on the Newbery Medal awards. Expert, KT Horning, developed a six-week course for those passionate about Newbery children's literature. Making a book decision for an entire classroom or school project may be daunting for teachers and outside educational resources can be helpful.

Children's literature is important and deserves representation and respect in acknowledging excellence. For centuries we have known the importance of children reading quality literature and we may want to encourage a book we consider of substance and significance. Who is the hero or heroine and why? What would you have done if you were in that position of the main character? Books can make for wonderful discussions. What's better than reading a good book? Finding someone to discuss and share this wonderful book with you. Thus, the Newbery Medal award continues to draw interests and acclaim year after year.

As the year of the 2022 award celebration draws near, let us be renewed and cognizant of the importance of good children's literature. Our next generation is worth the effort. What a journey the Newbery Award has been on through the past 100 years! The world changes as the decades roll by, but a prestigious book can be a timeless treasure.

Look ahead and plan for this upcoming 100-year anniversary celebration. Start your list. Will it be simply Newbery Medal winners or Newbery Honor books as well? Try to spark a book interest in one of the children you may have in your life.

Could it be that only the lucky few of us are able to hold onto a youthful outlook? Could it be that reading quality children's literature could be rejuvenated with this Newbery award reawakening?

I am hopeful.

Happy Reading!