

Children's Literature Awards

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There's a new calendar up on the wall, snow is falling, temperatures are below freezing—yep, it must be time for the American Library Association's (ALA) awards for children's literature! Awarded last week by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the ALA, the Caldecott Medal is awarded to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children. The Newbery Medal is awarded to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

This year the Caldecott was awarded to Brian Selznick for *the Invention of Hugo Cabret*, about which the ALA website (www.ala.org) states, "This tale casts a new light on the picture book form." Over 500 pages in length, this certainly isn't your typical picture book. It is a wonderful tale in which orphan Hugo, living secretly in a train station, attempts to complete a mysterious invention left by his father. Selznick uses black and white pencil illustrations, often in double-page spreads, to alternate with the text in telling the story. The similarity to silent movies is intentional, as the author/artist is paying homage to them.

Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a medieval village was deemed the most distinguished contribution to American children's literature and so the Newbery goes to author Laura Amy Schlitz. A school librarian, Schlitz originally wrote this collection of one-person plays (two are dialogues) for her students to perform. An avid medieval history buff, Schlitz didn't gloss over the graphic details of life in the days of

yore. Lice, fleas, not bathing, spearing boars, being cheated by the miller, living as a villein—all are covered in these monologues performed by such varied characters as the miller's son, the shepherdess, the lord's nephew, the glass-blower's apprentice and the beggar. Interspersed among the plays are brief historical notes that shed light on topics such as what a villein is, and what byproducts the craft of tanning leather spewed into the rivers, causing tension between the tanners and the folks whose lives depended on clean water.

Though there won't be a wild boar hunt next week at your Chippewa River District Library, there will be drop-in storytime on Monday and Thursday at 10:15, and a lapsit storytime for children 0-2 years on Wednesday, January 30, at 10:15. Tuesday, Jan. 29, is a busy day at the library: a special Mad Science for registered 4th-8th graders occurs at 4:15, registered teens will compete in the video game Guitar Hero, while non-registered teens can cheer them on or free play as time allows-the fun begins at 6:00, and the CMCH series We Can continues at 6:00. Monday through Friday students can receive homework help starting at 2:45.