



## AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein  
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***“The California Young Reader Medal (CYRM) program encourages recreational reading of popular literature among the young people of our state. Since its inception in 1974, millions of California children have nominated, read, and voted for the winners.”***

-From the CYRM official website, [California Young Reader Medal.org](http://CaliforniaYoungReaderMedal.org)

It is that time of year again, when the hard work of the various children’s book award committees culminates in the announcement of the winners. And – according to a press release I received from the American Library Association (ALA) – this year, for the first time, there was a live Webcast of the announcement. In addition, 2006 is the first year for the Theodor Seuss Geisel Award, which honors both the author and illustrator of an outstanding book for beginning readers.

By the time you read this, thirteen awards will have been announced. These book awards include the Coretta Scott King award, which recognizes an African American author and illustrator of outstanding books for children and young adults; and the Pura Belpré, which honors Latino writers and illustrators whose work best portrays, affirms and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in a work of liter-

ature for youth.

This is also the time of year for Mock elections, as more and more libraries host their own versions of these awards. Usually these are Mock Newbery - for the most outstanding contribution to children’s literature - and Mock Caldecott - for the most distinguished American picture book for kids; although there are other Mock ones, such as the Mock Sibert - for most distinguished informational book for children.

Many of the librarians who are on the [PUBYAC](http://PUBYAC) (Public Libraries for Young Adults and Children) listserv have been sharing the results of their Mock elections. Mostly, it seems to be adults who do the choosing. For instance, Deschutes Public Library in Bend, Oregon, had about 30 staff members meet to choose their favorites for the Newbery. *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler’s Shadow*, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, was their first choice. This book was also the first choice for the

Mock Sibert Award from the children’s librarians of the Dayton Metro Library in Ohio and the Allen County Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Dayton Library chose *Winter Lights: A Season in Poems and Quilts* by Anna Grossnickle Hines for their Mock Caldecott.

The Toledo-Lucas County Public Library (Ohio) collaborated with The Reading Railroad Children’s Bookstore in an adult program described as the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Caldecott Read-In. Their winner was Jacqueline Woodson’s book *Show Way*, illustrated by Hudson Talbott. The Allen County Library chose the same book for their Mock Caldecott.

A librarian from the Bedminster School in New Jersey posted the results from her Mock Caldecott elections, conducted with more than 300 kindergarten through fifth grade students. Their grand prize winner was the picture book *Roberto Clemente: Pride of the*

*Pittsburgh Pirates*, written by Jonah Winter and illustrated by Raul Colon.

Her process of involving students in this way is much like the California Young Reader Medal, which begins with the collection of recommendations from students all over the state. A committee narrows the titles to a “well-balanced list of nominees” and then issues a ballot. Students in classrooms and libraries read (or have read to them) all the books in a category and then each student votes for one book per category. A teacher or librarian tabulates the votes, so that each school, classroom or library only submits one final ballot.

Both the Mock elections and the CYRM are wonderful ways to help children (and adults) look more closely at the qualities that make a book memorable and unique. I particularly like the involvement of the children – it helps all of us, but the books are for them.