



Eerdmans Books for Young Readers is the winner of the 2015 (Mildred L.) Batchelder Award for *Mikis and the Donkey*, written by Bibi Dumon Tak, illustrated by Philip Hopman, and translated by Laura Watkinson. Anita Eerdman, president and publisher of Eerdmans Publishing Company, delivered these acceptance remarks at the ALSC Book and Media Awards Program on Monday, June 29, 2015, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

For more information about the Batchelder Award, visit <http://bit.ly/batchelder-award>.



Batchelder

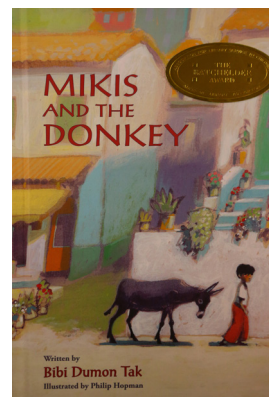
AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Good morning. On behalf of Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, I am so happy to be here to accept the 2015 Mildred L. Batchelder Award for *Mikis and the Donkey*. 2014 was an exceptional year for international children's books, and I offer my warmest congratulations to the Batchelder Honor winners, First Second Books and Enchanted Lion Books.

As you may know, the Batchelder Award is one of the few ALA awards that is given to the publisher, rather than to the author, illustrator, or translator. But we are keenly aware of our great debt to author Bibi Dumon Tak, illustrator Philip Hopman, translator Laura Watkinson, and Dutch publisher Querido Children's Books. This is the second Batchelder Award for this entire team, who also produced the 2012 winning book, *Soldier Bear*.

You may not be familiar with our company because as publishing companies go, we are definitely on the small side, with just three-and-a-half dedicated employees responsible for acquisitions, editorial, and production of some 16-18 titles per year. We are located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and are family owned and proudly independent. And we LOVE international children's books! Books in translation make up about half of the new titles on our list each season.

We have noticed a greater and greater openness to these books in the American marketplace in recent years. The major review journals of children's literature are



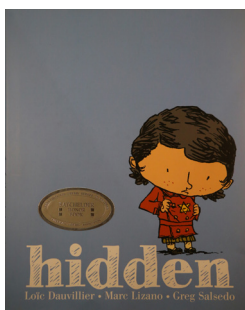
filled with books that originated in other languages. Organizations like USBBY work tirelessly to promote international books, and I am so pleased to see their programs at ALA being presented to capacity crowds. Numerous librarians across the U.S. do their part to share international books with their patrons through programming and displays and word-of-mouth recommendation. And, of course, the Batchelder Award has long been a sought-after stamp of approval for these books.

A recent article in *Publishing Perspectives* explores "Why Reading Translated Kids' Books Makes a Difference." The author quotes British writer, editor, and translator Daniel Hahn: "We have some bad habits in the English-speaking world," Hahn says. "We may be better than anyone at cultural export, but where import is concerned we are a disgrace... Writing translated from other languages makes you see things differently. It isn't less important for children, but more. How could it not be vital for readers

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers is an imprint of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, an independent publisher of religious books founded in 1911. Eerdmans' children's books tell stories about adventure, family, and friendship, but also help children wrestle with tougher issues, such as grief, divorce, and racism. *The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus*, illustrated by Melissa Sweet, written by Jen Bryant, and published by Eerdmans, received the 2015 Sibert Medal and Caldecott Honor.



2015 BATCHELDER HONOR BOOKS



Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust.

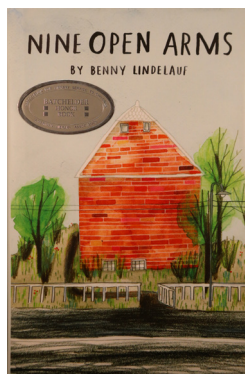
Dauvillier, Loïc.

Illus. by Marc Lizano.

Color by Greg Salsedo.

Trans. by Alexis Siegel.

First Second



Nine Open Arms.

Lindelauf, Benny.

Illus. by Dasha Tolstikova.

Trans. by John Nieuwenhuizen.

Enchanted Lion Books

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who are uniquely open to explorations of their own language; how can it not be essential for readers who, just now, are beginning to define the horizons of their experiences of the world?"¹

Giving children the opportunity to see things differently is indeed one of the valuable results of publishing books in translation. In *Mikis and the Donkey*, Mikis lives on the Greek island of Corfu -- a setting that couldn't be more different to the experience of an American child growing up in, say, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The houses, the streets, the town square where Mikis's grandfather meets his friends for weekend conversation, all feel distinctly foreign to an American sensibility. Mikis's grandfather gives him a DONKEY! How strange is that? Yet Mikis is a character who is eminently relatable for American kids. The camaraderie he develops with the donkey and the depth of his feeling for her will be well understood by any kid who thinks his dog understands him better than his family does; the warm hospitality Mikis feels at his grandmother's kitchen table, which often serves as an escape from his own overly-busy parents, will not be a stretch for American children to grasp. Mikis's school room, with its amusing cast of classmates and beloved teacher, will be easily recognizable. And so the commonalities provide a happy entry point into the differences. I wouldn't be surprised if more than a few readers longed to live the idyllic and slower-paced lifestyle of Corfu after reading *Mikis and the Donkey*!

This past year the subject of diversity in children's books has been much on our minds and at the forefront of many of our discussions. I hope that we are on the edge of a wonderful frontier in children's books where our stories are full of diversity of every kind. And I also hope that this diversity will encompass characters from places far away from where we ourselves call home.

Great thanks to Diane Janoff and the 2015 Batchelder Committee for honoring us with the selection of *Mikis and the Donkey*; to ALSC and all the wonderful people in the ALSC office in Chicago who keep us so well informed and who put up with our endless email queries; to our translator extraordinaire, Laura Watkinson, whose ever-growing list of translations that have won Batchelder Awards and Honors will soon require an entire page in her C.V.; and finally, to my dear colleague and friend Gayle Brown, our associate publisher and art director, whose great enthusiasm for books in translation is the reason for their dominant presence in our publishing program. Thank you all.

¹Olivia Snaije, "Why Reading Translated Kids' Books Makes a Difference," *Publishing Perspectives*, March 19, 2015. <http://publishingperspectives.com/2015/03/why-reading-translated-kids-books-makes-a-difference/>.



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2015 MILDRED L. BATCHELDER AWARD COMMITTEE

Diane Janoff, Chair, Queens (N.Y.) Library

Sarah Hagge, Chicago, Ill.

Celia Holm, Austin (Texas) Public Library

Elsworth Rockefeller, Oak Park (Ill.) Public Library

Sara-Jo Sites, George F. Johnson Memorial Library, Endicott, N.Y.



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Association for Library Service to Children

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