The ALSC/Booklist/YALSA Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production

History

The Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production (Odyssey Award) is given annually to recognize the best English language audiobook for children and young adults in the previous submission year. The award, established in 2007 and first awarded in 2008, is named to commemorate the epic poem *The Odyssey* by Homer, originally told and retold in the oral tradition. The Odyssey Award allows us to return to the ancient roots of storytelling, while recognizing contemporary formats. The award is jointly administered by the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) and is sponsored by *Booklist*.

Committee Charge

To annually select the best audiobooks produced for children (0-14) and young adults (12-18) available in English in the United States during the preceding eligibility year and, if warranted, to also select honor titles. One winner may be selected for each age category with a single honor list comprised of titles for both age categories. An audiobook is defined as a recording of a reading of a book. Audiobooks are unabridged recordings of an original print source that is available for institutional purchase. Audiobooks from Graphic novels should acknowledge that they have been modified and/or adapted to fit the audio format.

Committee Members

The committee consists of eleven members: five members appointed by ALSC; five members appointed by YALSA; a chair, whose appointment alternates between ALSC and YALSA divisions, with ALSC coordinating in even-numbered years and YALSA coordinating in odd-numbered years; and an administrative assistant, to be found and approved by ALSC or YALSA, depending on the year.

Committee members must have the ability to access audiobooks in all generally accepted industry standard formats.

The chair is a voting member of the committee with all the rights and responsibilities of other members. In addition, the chair presides at all meetings of the committee and serves as facilitator of both discussion and committee business. The chair of the committee will have sole responsibility to contact publishers to

obtain copies of nominated titles for all committee members. The chair will serve as list owner of an electronic discussion list created through the ALSC or YALSA office solely for use by the committee and will take responsibility for list maintenance.

If the chair requests, the Vice President/President-Elect of the chair's ALA division may mirror existing policies of other youth award committees to provide assistance that does not impact the award charge, committee balance or voting membership.

The Editor/Publisher of *Booklist* magazine, the Odyssey Award's sponsor, will appoint a consultant to the committee. The *Booklist* consultant assists the chair with determining title eligibility and with other questions that arise. This consultant may participate fully in all title discussions and help count ballots but is not a voting member of the committee.

Members serve a one-year term beginning immediately after LibLearnX through the announcement of the awards at the next LibLearnX Conference. All members are required to attend all Odyssey Committee meetings held during the selection process. In the event a member is unable to complete their term, the president of the appropriate division shall appoint a replacement. If a committee member is having difficulty with the time requirements involved in listening to the audios, they should immediately consult with the Odyssey Committee chair and/or the ALSC priority group consultant or YALSA board liaison so that a mutual agreement, including possible resignation from the committee, can be worked out.

Division Consultants & Communication

ALSC will assign a priority group consultant and YALSA a board liaison to deal with questions from the chair and the committee regarding procedure, personnel, and procedures. The chair will communicate fully with both division representatives, while the representative from the administering division will serve as the lead liaison. In addition, the chair will maintain open and equal communication with the staff and leadership of both ALSC and YALSA.

Both ALSC and YALSA will work with the committee chair in their respective administrative years, to find and approve an administrative assistant to help the chair with administrative duties such as tracking incoming audiobooks, assigning recordings to committee members, and requesting titles from publishers.

Work with Chair

The ALSC priority group consultant and YALSA board liaison work with the chair to review the procedures of the committee and to make recommendations for improving the process during the working year. The division representatives also work with the chair to resolve procedural and personnel issues as they come.

Work with Committee Members

Committee members may consult either or both of the division representatives should there be unusual issues that the chair cannot resolve, particularly if there are issues regarding the chair's performance of their duties.

Eligibility

The ALSC/Booklist/YALSA Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production is awarded annually to the best audiobooks produced for children and young adults during the previous submission year.

- **General:**
  - All literary genres are eligible for consideration.
  - Read-along Kits (book + audio productions) are also eligible.
  - The award considers solely the audio production of the title.
  - Audiobooks featuring single or multiple narrators are eligible
  - The awards will be presented to the producers of the winning and/or honor audiobooks. The recipient of the awards are the producers of the first U.S. release of the title.
  - "In English" means only audiobooks produced in English are eligible, but this requirement does not limit the use of words or phrases in another language where appropriate in context.
- **Availability:**
  - The audiobook must be available to school and public libraries as an institutional purchase for the purposes of lending.
  - Must be available to the public.

- **Publication date:**
    - The committee will consider and vote on titles published within their assigned calendar year, January 1 to October 31, in addition to those published between November 1 and December 31 of the previous year.
    - A title may only be submitted once and cannot be reconsidered the next year. Note that committee member terms begin immediately following LibLearnX in January, and thus incoming members will listen to titles that were released in the two months preceding their term of service.
    - Publication date is considered the first U.S. release to the public for purchase, whether download, CD, MP3, or other audio format.
    - Audiobooks previously published in another country are eligible (presuming a U.S. edition has been published during the period of eligibility).
- **Format:**
    - Emerging formats and audiobook trends will be evaluated year to year by the current chair and the ASLC and YALSA Consultant and Liaison with input from the current Presidents of each respective ALA group.
    - Audiobook productions that have simply been remastered are ineligible for consideration.
    - New productions (narrator(s), producer, publisher) of previously released titles will be considered.
    - Audio-only titles with no accessible print source are ineligible.
- **Age Range:**
    - The audiobook is intended for either young adults or children, who are defined as persons up to and including age eighteen; works for this entire age range are eligible.
    - Adult titles are ineligible.
- **Other:**
    - If no title in either age category is deemed sufficiently meritorious, the award will not be presented for that category.
    - The chair and administrative assistant, with assistance from designated ALSC or YALSA staff and the Booklist consultant, is responsible for verifying the eligibility of all nominated titles.

Title Acquisition & Recommendations for Publishers

While the Odyssey Committee may receive audiobooks from publishers, the chair and administrative assistant, with the help of the *Booklist* consultant, must scout reviews and publisher materials to find and solicit eligible titles that have not been submitted and request them from audio publishers. Only the chair should send requests to publishers. Publishers should be aware that the Odyssey eligibility period, November 1 through October 31, does not match the calendar year. Thus, fall titles released after November 1 should be submitted to the following year's incoming committee members in January, after appointments have been made and are listed on the Odyssey Award website. In addition, publishers submitting titles to the Odyssey Committee are strongly advised to provide titles <u>immediately</u> upon publication release to allow careful evaluation. Audiobooks should be submitted by publishers within the quarter in which they are produced, in order to better ensure fair and thorough consideration by the entire committee. Publishers are encouraged to provide titles of superior merit to each Odyssey Committee member, including the chair. Publishers submitting download-only titles to the committee should first consult with the chair regarding submission procedures. Because the Odyssey Award is given to the title's producer, it is critical that producers list the appropriate contact person and provide both business and non-office phone contact numbers on submission forms. The award winners and honor recipients will be contacted by committee members prior to the announcement of the Youth Media Awards held in January at LibLearnX.

Publisher Solicitation

- All committee members must comply with ALSC and YALSA Policy for Service on the Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production Committee.
- The chair and/or administrative assistant are responsible for contact with the publishers. Committee members must not solicit publishers for free personal copies of titles. If members receive, or are offered, unsolicited titles from publishers, they may accept the titles.
- Committee members must not solicit publishers for favors, invitations, etc. If members receive these, however, they will use their own judgment in accepting. Publishers understand that such acceptance in no way influences members' actions or selections.

Odyssey Award Criteria

- **General Guidelines**

  This award recognizes excellence by a producer or director for accomplishment and/or innovation in the production of an audiobook. The two winning titles must exemplify the highest standards of direction, narration, engineering, and technical achievement.

  - Popularity is not the criterion for this award nor is the award based on the message or content of the book on which it is based.

  - The committee must consider technical and aesthetic aspects, including the effective use of narration as well as music and sound effects when they are incorporated into the production. These elements must combine to support and enhance, through the audio medium, the literary merit of the work.

  - The audio production is the primary focus of the Odyssey Award. Though it is solely the audio that is evaluated, the committee may refer to the text to resolve questions concerning portions of the audio. In a publication that includes material that is intended to be explored simultaneously with the audio (as in the case of a picture book plus audio read-along that requires a text-to-audio match), the combined material plus audio elements must create a seamless production.

  - The audio must engage, stimulate and maintain listeners' interest.

  - During evaluation, a committee member may perceive a narration, editing, or production flaw such as a segment of text repeated, omitted, edited incorrectly or other flaws that result in unacceptable audio quality. The committee member should immediately communicate with the chair who will investigate whether that flaw is unique to the committee member's download or physical title, or if it is an error that appears on every copy. Although no title may be perfect, noticeable flaws will remove a title from consideration.

  - Committee members are encouraged to read articles that explore the unique characteristics, terminology and evaluative challenges of the audio format (see **Appendix 2**).

  - All committee members should refer to and become familiar with ALSC and YALSA inclusion and diversity guidelines (see **Appendix 3** and **Appendix 4**)

- **Production Qualities**

- o **Narration:**
    - ▪ Does the reader(s) have good voice quality, diction, and timing?
    - ▪ Is the reader(s) believable and convincing?
    - ▪ Does the reader(s) distinguish between characters by changing pitch, tone, and inflection? Are accents or dialects used and if so, are they handled authentically and consistently?
    - ▪ Are all words, including proper nouns, locales, non-English terms, character names, and others pronounced correctly and consistently?
    - ▪ Does the reader(s) avoid negative stereotyping and condescending vocal mannerisms and style?
    - ▪ Is the performance dynamic and does it reflect the expressive nature of the text?
- o **Sound Quality**
    - ▪ Is the sound sharp and clear with no obvious humming, distortion, or electronic interference?
    - ▪ Does the sound quality remain consistent throughout the recording?
- o **Background Music and Sound Effects**
    - ▪ If music and sound effects are used, do they enhance the text and support the vocal performance?
    - ▪ Does the music represent the emotional and structural content of the text?

- ● **Overall Rating**

    The sum of all the criteria should represent the highest achievement in audiobooks for children and/or young adults, including

    - ● excellence in narration;
    - ● excellence of audio interpretation of story, theme, or concept;
    - ● excellence of execution in the aural techniques of the medium;
    - ● excellence in the delineation through the audio medium of literary elements including plot, theme, characters, mood, setting, or information presented;
    - ● excellence in the appropriateness of technique or treatment to the story, theme, or concept.

Calendar

The Committee will observe the following calendar:

October—Dec: Committee members and chair are appointed, along with the administrative assistant, and the chair sends letters of welcome to committee members, which include a draft calendar and a copy of policies and procedures. The chair may arrange an informal, optional committee meeting during the upcoming LibLearnX Conference. The chair works with ALSC and YALSA staff to establish the method for best notifying publishers with an explanation of the award and a list of committee names and addresses, noting that members will begin their term in the coming January and that titles released in November and December will be under consideration by the new committee (see Eligibility). Appropriate award information for publishers and other interested parties will also be posted on the ALSC and YALSA websites.

January—April: Members' term begins immediately following LibLearnX. Listening commences as audiobooks become available, and includes titles released in the previous two months (see Eligibility). The chair establishes a routine for equitable evaluation by committee members, which includes multiple listeners of titles and allocation of listening minutes. Committee members suggest titles for evaluative listening that may lead to nomination and award consideration to the committee as a whole. The chair compiles a monthly master list of suggested titles and distributes these updated lists to the committee.

May:

By May deadline, the chair will assemble and send to committee members a list of all suggested titles that will be discussed at the Annual meeting. Committee members will listen to all suggested titles in their entirety and maintain careful evaluative notes of the meritorious qualities of the work in preparation for in-depth discussion at Annual.

Annual Conference:

Prior to the Annual Conference, the chair will communicate the audio-video equipment needs for the committee meetings. The chair's division office will assist in scheduling the appropriate playback equipment prior to the meeting. The chair should verify the set-up at the meeting location as early as possible, and immediately communicate with the division at ALA Conference Headquarters if there are problems. The committee meets in three closed sessions to discuss all titles suggested up to May deadline.

June—October:

Committee members continue to listen, and each month, at an agreed upon time, suggest titles for award consideration. The chair will compile and distribute to committee members, and appropriate division representatives, monthly cumulative master lists of titles suggested since Annual. Committee members will listen to all suggested titles in their entirety and maintain careful evaluative notes of the meritorious qualities of the work.

October—December:

October 31: Final date to submit audiobooks for consideration. October deadline as determined by the chair (suggested not later than October 10): From the list of suggested titles, committee members nominate up to three titles for the voting ballot; members write annotations for each title. All nominations are submitted confidentially to the chair. The chair compiles a list of all nominated titles and sends the list to members and division offices.

October deadline—December deadline: Committee members continue to listen and suggest titles for award consideration. The chair will compile and distribute master lists of newly suggested titles to committee members and division offices. Committee members will listen to all suggested titles in their entirety and maintain careful evaluative notes of the meritorious qualities of the work.

December—Jan: December deadline as determined by the chair (suggested not later than December 8): Committee members nominate three additional, (previously un-nominated) titles and submit them, with annotations, for the voting ballot. Chair compiles and sends a final annotated list of all nominated titles to members and division offices. Committee members will re-evaluate all nominated titles noting the qualities that match the award criteria. The committee chair will establish a routine for each nominated title to be reviewed through a process of critical listening. Critical listening requires a committee member to perform a detailed, rigorous, assessment in an optimum audio listening environment of each assigned title, noting its excellence or deficiency in meeting the award criteria.

LibLearnX   Prior to the LibLearnX Conference, the chair will communicate the
Conference   audio equipment needs for the committee meetings. The chair's division office will assist in scheduling the appropriate playback equipment prior to the meeting. The chair should verify the set-up at the meeting location as early as possible, and immediately communicate with the division at ALA Conference Headquarters if there are problems. The committee meets in three closed sessions to select a winner and honor titles (if any) from the list of nominated titles. Winning titles are announced at the Youth Media Awards Press Conference.

Conduct and Procedures

Confidentiality

As all nominated titles must be kept confidential, there will be no announcements of nominated titles. All committee meetings and discussions, including electronic discussions, are closed to YALSA and ALSC membership and the general public.

Suggested Listening & Nominations

Because the listening load is substantive, committee members must maintain a rigorous schedule for listening to audiobooks throughout the entire committee year. As members listen to titles assigned by the chair or those personally selected, they will suggest those that they deem potentially award-worthy to the committee as a whole for further evaluation. These suggestions should be made as they are discovered and not held for official nominating deadlines. Following this procedure allows committee members to reflect on what their peers consider to be award-worthy titles and narrows the list, leading to more efficient and productive meetings.

At the agreed-upon deadlines in October, and again in December, committee members submit three official nominations each to the chair and the administrative assistant. Each committee chair sets these specific deadlines to accommodate the oddities of that year's calendar, the actual conference dates, and any conflicts that the chair may have that would prevent the compilation of suggestions and/or nominations.

Field Nominations

Field nominations are encouraged and should be solicited by the chair. To be eligible, they must be submitted on the official ALSC/YALSA suggestion form, available on the ala.org website. Field nominations require a second from an Odyssey committee member. The chair informs the committee of field nominations, which remain active until all nominations are closed. If no committee member seconds the field nomination, the title is dropped from consideration. No publishers, authors, or editors may nominate their own titles.

Voting Procedures

Following discussion at LibLearnX, balloting will begin. Members must be present to vote. Proxies will not be accepted.

Selection of Award Audiobooks

The following procedures should be followed for both categories (one winning title for Children and one winning title for Young Adults). This means that there will be two winning title ballots, conducted separately for each category.

- Ballots will be used and tallied either by the chair or their designee(s).
- Members are reminded that, at this point, they are voting for the winners, NOT for honor titles. A separate ballot will be conducted for honor titles.
- A title may appear on either the Children's ballot or the YA ballot but not both. Placement on the correct ballot shall be determined by the committee.
- There is no requirement that the Odyssey Awards be awarded. If no audiobooks are deemed worthy of the honor, the committee can decide to withhold the award for that year in either age category.
- On the ballot each member votes for their top three choices. First choice receives five points, the second choice receives three points, and the third choice receives one point. To win, a title must receive six first-place votes and must also receive at least five more points than the second-place title. If no title meets these criteria on the first ballot, any title receiving no votes is removed from consideration and a period of discussion of remaining titles follows. A second ballot is then conducted. Balloting continues in this fashion until a winner is declared.

Selection of Honor Titles

Once the winning titles are selected, the committee will begin the discussion of honor books. Though two award titles may be selected, the single Honor list will contain both Children's and Young Adult titles. The terms of the award provide parameters:

- There is no requirement that honor audiobooks be named.
- There is no rule dictating the number of honor audiobooks to be named.
- There is the expectation that honor audiobooks be truly distinguished, not merely strong contenders for the award.
- If the committee decides there are no titles worthy of being honored, the selection process is complete.
- If there are titles that the committee deems worthy of being honored, the selection process proceeds and the committee must choose between two options for determining honor titles:

•Option 1: to use the winning selection ballots to choose honor titles. The committee looks at titles with the next highest number of points and determines which of those titles merit being awarded honor status.

• Option 2: to ballot one more time. Only one additional ballot with titles from the **first** winning title ballots is allowed. The honor audiobook selection ballot consists of titles from the two winning selection ballots (minus the winners, of course) that received points. By consensus, titles with no remaining support also may be withdrawn.

The committee studies the ballot tally (either from the winning selection ballots or from one subsequent ballot on honor audiobooks), and the committee determines which titles committee members deem to be truly distinguished.

Honor audiobooks are announced to the public in alphabetical order by title to confer equal status for all.

Annotations and Press Release

The committee is responsible for writing a press release; annotations for the two winning titles and honor audiobooks, though previously written, are reworked by the committee to ensure consistency. The chair divides up the titles among committee members to complete this task; the *Booklist* consultant aids the chair by reviewing these annotations and assisting with the writing of the press release and will proofread it before its release. Both the annotations and the press release will mention the specific audiobook criteria which led to each title's recognition. ALA Public Information Office provides specific information about the press release, annotations and the press conference.

Immediately after the press conference, the chair and/or the appropriate divisional staff, will see that the ALSC and YALSA audiobook selection committees receive information about the winning and honor book title(s) appropriate (by age) for their lists. This information will include specific bibliographic information and annotations. The titles will automatically be included on the final lists of these committees.

Public Relations

Committee members work with their local news media in publicizing the Odyssey Award. If interviewed, committee members emphasize the importance of distinguished audiobooks for children and teens, the award criteria, and the committee's reasons for its choice as stated in the press release. Committee

members are free to express their own views on particular audiobooks, but they need to be mindful of confidentiality issues.

Correspondence

The chair handles correspondence specific to their committee's selection and work. In particular, the chair sends a letter of appreciation to the employers/supervisors of committee members.

Preparation for the Award Presentation

The chair works with their division office and *Booklist* Consultant to make necessary arrangements for presentation of the award during the ALA Annual Conference. Communication with the winner is paramount. In addition, the chair prepares remarks for the award presentation at the Annual Conference following the award announcement. The winners receive a medal and honorees receive certificates mounted on a plaque. In addition, narrators will receive an unmounted certificate in appreciation of their work on the audio productions. Although committee members are not required to be present, most find a special satisfaction in being part of the audience on this important occasion.

In making the award presentation, the chair:

- Introduces committee members.
- Introduces any representatives from the producer.
- Makes prepared remarks, explaining why the committee deemed the two winning audiobooks as truly distinguished with regard to the award criteria.
- Introduces the award recipients and presents their award to the honorees.
- Clips from the award-winning and honor audiobooks are usually played.

Evaluation of Award

At the end of every three years, the Award will be reevaluated by a task force, composed of a group representative of audiobook publishers, *Booklist* personnel, and members from ALSC and YALSA. Reevaluation is to include discussion of any changes needed in policies and procedures (especially as related to accommodating changing technology), determination of the merits/feasibility of continuing the award, and to determine if ALSC and YALSA wish to continue their collaboration.

Appendix 1: Recommended Reading

These and additional resources are available from the ALSC office in PDF format.

Beavin, Kristi. "Audiobooks: Four Styles of Narration." *Horn Book Magazine* 72, no. 5 (September 1996): 566-573.

Beers, Kylene. "Listen While You Read." *School Library Journal* 44, no. 5 (April 1998): 30-36.

Burkey, Mary. "The Booklist Odyssey Interview: Arnie Cardillo." *Booklist* 104, no. 13 (March 2008): 79

———. "The Booklist Odyssey Interview: Dan Musselman." *Booklist* 107, no. 12 (February 15, 2011): 82.

———. "Voices in My Head: Odyssey 2010." *Booklist* 106, no. 13 (March 2010): 84.

———."Sounds Good to Me: Listening to Audiobooks with a Critical Ear." Booklist 103, no. 19/20 (June 1 & 15, 2007): 104.

———. "Audiobooks Alive with the Sound of Music."*Book Links* 18, no. 1 (September 2008): 24-25.

Campbell, Robyn. "The Power of the Listening Ear."*English Journal* 100, no. 5 (May 1, 2011): 66-70.

Clark, Ruth Cox. "Audiobooks for Children: Is This Really Reading?." *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children 5*, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 49-50.

Frum, David. "Reading By Ear."*Commentary* 127, no. 5 (May 2009): 94-96.

Goldsmith, Francisca. "Earphone English."*School Library Journal* 48, no. 5 (May 2002): 50-53.

Grover, Sharon, and LizetteHannegan. "Not Just for Listening." *Book Links* 14, no. 5 (May 2005): 16-19.

Harmon, Amy. "Loud, Proud, Unabridged: It Is Too Reading!." *New York Times*, (May 26, 2005): 1.

Holley, Pam Spencer. "The Booklist Odyssey Interview: Troy Juliar." *Booklist* 105, no. 14(March 15, 2009): 72.

Jemtegaard, Kristi. "Readers vs. Listeners."*Booklist* 101, no. 15 (April 2005): 139.

Jemtegaard, Kristi Elle. "Audio Poetry: A Call to Words." *Horn Book Magazine* 81, no. 3 (May 2005): 357-364.

Maughan, Shannon. "Audiobooks 2.0."*Publishers Weekly* 257, no. 19 (May 10, 2010): 11-16.

Mediatore, Kaite, and Mary K. Chelton."Reading with Your Ears*." Reference & User Services Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Summer2003 2003): 318-324.

Myrick, Ellen. "Say It With Music: Audiobooks With Pizzazz." *Booklist* 105, no. 5 (November 2008): 64.

Saricks, Joyce. "LA: Essentials of Listening Advisory." *Booklist* 104, no. 21 (July 2008): 16.

Vardell, Sylvia. "My Odyssey Voyage." Booklist 104, no. 19/20 (June 2008): 124.

Appendix 2: Audiobook Lexicon and Performance Terms

Abridged	original work edited by professional abridger, with goal of staying true to spirit and content of book
Accent	of a specific cultural group, nationality, or region, e.g. German or Mid-Western, or a socio / economic or class accent
Actuality audio	section of audio from another source (such as interviews, animal sounds) added to the original studio recording
Ambience	sound quality that comes from the recording studio environment rather than directly from the sound source
Articulation	enunciating words and phrases clearly, and cleanly
Attributives	identifying phrases such as "he said" and "she whispered." This skill requires no "spillover" or "bleeding" between narrator and character
Audio cue mismatch	audio mismatch with source visual or text; a sound effect or added music that does not match the text, or in readalongs, match the illustration
Audiobook original	audiobook with no print/ebook counterpart, or a title that is available in audio prior to print/ebook publication
Bonus material	extras added to audio title, or items from print title that may be on audio: timeline, glossary, author interview etc.
Book app	interactive digital book that is accessed on a device such as a tablet computer or mobile phone, may include synchronized text, animations, audio, and more
Break point	logical and appropriate stopping points of audio medium segments or other breaks in the audio production
Breathy	type of mouth sound, sharp or odd breaths of narrator, audible breaths at sentence breaks
Bright	sound quality that is clear, sharp
Cadence	rhythm of speech, created through modulation and inflection
Characterization	Characters must be distinct from each other and consistent in their tone, attitude, age, and accent. Their voices must match their given character descriptions (if there are any.)
Choppy edit	noticeable or abrupt editing of sound

Clam shell	hard case designed for multiple circulations and used for library and school editions of physical audiobooks
Clarity of narration	clear and understandable reading, diction
Clarity of production	recording clarity, clean sound throughout title, not muddy or muted
Clipped edit	end of a word is cut off in audio editing
Consistency	narrator maintaining energy and character voicings, even if narration was recorded at different times
Context of line	maintaining meaning of text through expression and emphasis
Continuous record	narration recorded in extended segments without interruption, as opposed to "punch-in" edits
Cover art	audiobook may match hardcover or paperback print item's cover art, or may be entirely different
Cultural authenticity	match of reader and culture of character—accents or dialects authentic, not stereotyped. May include authentic music
Dialect	of a specific group of people: e.g. Appalachian
Digital distortion	cracking or blurry sound when volume exceeds upper digital range
Digital download	audiobook available as a digital file, accessed and downloaded directly to computer or playback device, needing no delivery medium
Digital-only	audiobooks distributed by a publisher solely as a download
Director	person hired to direct the talent in the studio during the audiobook recording
Direct-to-consumer digital	digital audiobooks that need no distribution media (such as MP3CD, Preloaded Digital player, CD) and are accessed by a playback device
Distribution media	method of delivering audio (MP3CD, Preloaded Digital player, CD) that requires another playback device such as a CD player
Download service vendor	an arrangement of an individual or library system to purchase licensed audiobooks from an internet retailer, e.g. Audible, OverDrive
Dramatic dynamic range	controlled range of volume, with emotion shown through energy, and not resulting in uneven sound levels

Dramatization	adaptation, usually multi-voiced, often with sound effects, music, interaction, often called "audio drama" or "radio theater" (NOT same as multi-voiced)
DRM	digital rights management, technologies used by publishers or distributors that control access or usage of digital audio
Dry mouth/ gluey mouth	clicking mouth sound
Emotion	degree to which emotional content of text is expressed, explicate the meaning of text through the voice
Energy	a quality of narrator's reading that engenders listener engagement
Enhanced product	material added to audiobook package, such as illustrations, games, computer files, video; see also "value-added"
Equalization	pleasant and non-fatiguing tonal quality over full range of audio spectrum of audio format
Executive producer	person employed by audio publisher, oversees total audiobook production and funding
Expression	overall performance quality, using a range which engenders listener engagement
Extras	forewords, afterwords, glossaries, dedications, photo captions or notes, miscellaneous words that appear in picture book's illustrations
Fades, in / out	bringing in or out music and sound effects, may be gradual or steep. Also known as "ramping" sounds in or out
Flat	narration that seems dull, unemotional, monotone
Formatting	editing to fit on cassette (104 min), CD (80 min), or MP3-CD (12+ hours)
Full cast narration	multiple narrators performing as individual characters during ensemble reading
Fully-voiced	a single narrator using a range of multiple character differentiations and voicings in a solo performance
Gluey	mouth sound
Hardware	the physical device that is used to access an audio medium
Hiss	audible background noise, unwarranted high-frequency noise

Hollow	sound quality that echoes or lacks depth
Hot sound	audio quality that is too loud or intense—or "hot"
ID3 tags	metadata that allows CD and digital audio players to display the track and title information
Incidental music	music at beginning, end, or other points in production
Index points / track points	invisible markings that allow listener to jump to points on audio file—may be of varied length, depending on producer
Inflection	overall performance quality, rise and fall of voice pitch used for expression
Intro	Identifies title, author, narrator, etc.
Juicy	"wet" type of mouth sound, saliva noise
Licensed audiobook	audiobook available for legal purchase through authorized distributor by arrangement with the producer
Lifeless	sound quality that does not engage the listener, dry
Liner notes	text / visual material describing the production, may be on printed on sleeve / wrap or available digitally
Lip smacks	type of mouth sound
Listener engagement	the involvement of the listener in the production
Medium	a means that provides transmission or storage of information
Missing text	errors where text from source is missing in finish audio production
Mix	combining distinct tracks or audio segments into a unified production
Mood	emotional ambience of the audio, created by narrator's voice, music, sound effects
Mouth clicks	type of mouth sound
MP3	audio encoding format that compresses data, used for downloaded audiobooks and for MP3-CDs that hold more than an 80-minute CD
Muddy	sound quality—audio muffled, or indistinct; excess of bass energy, missing mid to high frequencies

Multi-voiced production	more than one narrator, but not necessarily an actor for each character, nor recorded as an ensemble at the same time
Mushy	vocal quality, lack of precision in diction
Music cues / tags	music used to note scene change, identify character, depict mood, reference time period, or other aspect of production
Music library	stock music licensed from a vendor, used in the audiobook production
Musical bed	music that is heard under the voice, throughout portions or large parts of the production
Musical intro	music at beginning of production
Musical outro	music at end of production
Narrator	one who delivers the content of the audiobook
Narrator match	narrator voice matches character age, gender, time period, setting, mood, etc.
Noise-gating	an abrupt edit resulting in clipped words or in silence between words
Off-mic	narrator is recorded away from the microphone, or narrator's mouth turns away from the microphone
Original music	musical score that is composed expressly for the audiobook production
Out-of-sync	mismatched sound and visual, when the voice doesn't track with the visual in a production such as a readalong picture book
Outro	information at end of production, may contain program title, performer's name, author, publisher information, copyright, etc.
Pacing of narration	narrator reading too fast or too slow
Pacing of production	passages paced correctly for dramatic arc of story
Page rate	how long it takes a narrator to complete a page of text, also known as pick-up and reader acquisition rate
Page turn / paper noise	studio noise

Partially-voiced	a single narrator using primarily a "straight read" with a few major character differentiations
Peaky	sound quality that is too high in sound or energy level
Pitch range	high or low range of sound
Playback device	hardware, such as iPod, cell phone or CD player, that allows playback of distribution media (cassette tape, CD disc) or digital files (MP3, WMA)
Plosives or wind pops	noticeable microphone noise, mouth pop sounds, "pp" "tt" "ff" pops
Podiobook	serialized, unpublished books available via the internet directly from the author as audio podcasts, usually free
Preloaded audio playback device	a hardware device that is preloaded with a digital audiobook, self-contained, i.e. Playaway
Presence	audio quality that feels authentic, actual—as if you are there
Producer	person hired by executive producer; hires talent, books studio time, handles financial details
Prosody	vocal melody and tonal inflection
Public domain	content not restricted by copyright, audiobooks that may be recorded by volunteers and distributed through Librivox or an audiobook publisher
Punch-in, punch and roll	narration edited as recorded, requiring a stop-and-start interruption to the reading, as opposed to a "continuous record"
Read-along	an audiobook meant to be listened to while following along with the picture book text and illustrations
Remastered	a new master created by altering or enhancing the sound quality of an older recording. Not to be considered a re-release.
Reader engagement	the perception that the narrator was actively involved in the production
Repeated sentence / word	production error where poor editing results in repeated content
Rich	recording clarity, clean sound throughout title, not muddy or muted
Sequence announcement	vocal prompt at end of CD, cassette, or audio portion, also known as "tag lines"

Sibilant	distortion / overload of sound resulting in an over-emphasis of "sss," "fff," and "ch" sounds
Silent intervals	silence, such as the space between the chapters
Simultaneous release	a release date of an audiobook simultaneous with the print book release
Sleeve	the packaging material that holds printed information or CDs
Sound effects	establish action, time, place, mood; added audio effects that are referenced in the text or illustrations, often found in read-alongs
Sound level	overall volume of recording—ideally consistent, not variable or uneven
Soundscape	the total sound environment, the created audible world of the audiobook
Special or bonus features	added author interviews or other audio material not found in original text, also known as "value added"
Spoken word performance	an audio presentation that is recording of a seminar, lecture, comedy routine, etc
Straight read	narrator reading in his or her natural voice
Streaming audio	digital audiobook playback over a live internet connection
Stress	emphasizing a word or syllable—stress on the wrong syllable or wrong word results in changed meaning
Studio noise	the noise made by clothing, jewelry, page turns, body movements and other extraneous sound that is captured in the recording
Tag lines	comments at beginning or end of audio segment such as "End of side two. Please insert…"
Tail	end of production
Talent	person hired to read; may be an actor, author, professional narrator, or celebrity
Talking Book Program	audiobook service provided by the National Library Services to the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Text-to-speech software	computer program that allows software to create an artificial voice that translates text directly into a digital file
Thin	sound quality that strains the ear, difficult to hear

Throat swallows	body noise
Tinny	sound quality that is artificial, electronic - lacks low frequency
TOC files	Table of Content files - metadata that ensures that sound files play the audiobook in correct sequence
Top	beginning of audiobook
Track points / index points	invisible markings that allow listener to jump to points on audio file - may be of varied length, depending on producer
Tummy rumbles	body noise
Unabridged	complete, unaltered work
Underscore	music under narration
Unvoiced	a single narrator performing a "straight read" in his or her natural voice with no characterization
Upcut	choppy edit, noticeable or abrupt editing of sound at the beginning of a word
Value-added	extras added to audio title such as visual content, author interview, etc.
Vocables	non-word sounds that evoke meaning, e.g. clicks, grunts, sighs
Voice actor	professional narrator
Wall of performance	a barrier that may be apparent to a listener who is aware of the voice actor's performance, or may be removed by a skilled narrator
Widows and orphans	sentences or text fragment split by audio production side, CD, or segment change
Woofing the microphone	narration causing pops or plosives
Word count	used to estimate recording length—typical narrator reads approximately 154 words per minute, or 9200 words an hour
Wrap	the paper with production information that slips in the outer packaging

Originally Date: 2011 (Mary Burkey)

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The following industry professionals generously contributed to the creation of this list:

- Arnie Cardillo (Live Oak Media)

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- Paul Gagne (Weston Woods)

- Eileen Hutton (Brilliance Audio)

- Troy Juliar (Recorded Books)

- Pete Pantelis

- David Rapkin (David Rapkin Audio Productions)

- Dan Zitt (Penguin Random House Audio)

Appendix 3: ALSC Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

- Inclusiveness is a core value of ALSC. It is the responsibility of all ALSC media award and notables committee to reflect this value in their approach to their work. ALSC award and Notables lists provide librarians, teachers and parents with information about books and other media our association holds in the highest regard. Everyone benefits, children most of all, when the titles recognized within and across ALSC awards and best-of-the-year lists authentically reflect the diversity found in our nation and the wider world.

- Each year there will be overlap among individual committees in terms of titles being considered for recognition. The Caldecott, Notables, and Pura Belpré committees, for example, inevitably end up considering some of the same books. *It is the responsibility of each committee to consider a work based upon how it meets the criteria of their specific award rather than speculating whether a particular title will receive another award.* If a title is recognized by multiple committees, it does not diminish the work of any of those committees; rather, it draws greater attention to a particular work's excellence.

- *As individuals serving on committees evaluate materials according to the criteria outlined for their specific charge*, they should strive to be aware of how their own perspectives and experiences shape their responses to materials. Every committee member brings unique strengths to the table, but every committee member also brings gaps in knowledge and understanding, and biases. Committee members are strongly encouraged to be open to listening and learning as well as sharing as they consider materials representing diverse experiences both familiar and unfamiliar to them.

Appendix 4: YALSA Evaluating Authenticity Guidelines

In consultation with chairs of the following committees (Coretta Scott King, Pura Belpré, Sydney Taylor, Schneider), along with resources from the American Indian Library Association, the Asian/Pacific American Library Association, and the Purdue Online Writing Lab, the following guide has been created to help committee members ensure that full attention is paid to representation of characters and settings in order to avoid awarding narratives containing blatant stereotypes and harmful depictions.

What is Authenticity?

"Cultural authenticity is an analysis of the extent to which a book reflects the worldview of beliefs and values and depicts the accurate details of everyday life and language for a specific cultural group. Given the diversity within any cultural group, however, there is never one image of life within a group, which means that themes and underlying ideologies are often more significant for analysis" ("Evaluating Literature for Authenticity").

The following topics, questions, and appendices can be useful when thinking about the complexity of cultural authenticity and intersectionality when it comes to sensitive and responsible representation.

Additionally, it should be understood that sometimes certain representations in historical fiction or in non-fiction may seem problematic by today's standards, but their existence in literature could be for a specific purpose of critique, in which case, it is up to your committee to have thoughtful, critical discussions about such portrayals. So be sure to take into account the time period of the text, as well as the representations of gender, sexuality, race, class, (dis)ability, etc.

Literary qualities

This refers to the formalistic components of a book, which are already commonly spelled out within YALSA awards criteria. These elements include: Voice, style, setting, theme, and design. Further components that require deeper cultural competency are: Characters and voice.

- Characters and voice

  Are characters being portrayed realistically, fully, and respectfully? Or are they being included for a specific purpose, as a tool rather than a person? "Disability is used to mark characters as 'unique,' and it is sometimes what prompts a narrative in the first place; however, few works develop complex perspectives about disability (Mitchell and Snyder 10)". Similarly, depictions of Native American

characters tend to focus on stereotypes based in colonial history, relying on narratives of white saviors and savages. For the purposes of literary evaluation on your given committee, consider the following questions:

- How is disability represented in the literature? How is normalcy reinforced?
- Is disability just a catalyst for the narrative?
- In what ways do disability, gender, race, sexuality, nationality, and class intersect?
- How are disabilities like blindness tied to "Truth" or deafness to communication within a literary work? What symbolism is attached to disability?
- Do non-white characters exhibit a wide range of positive and negative human emotions, behaviors, reactions, and lifestyles?
- Are racial and ethnic minorities portrayed as successful problem solvers rather than dependent on white saviors?
- Are Black, Latinx,[1] Asian, Native American, and other non-white cultures portrayed as diverse or homogeneous? What about LGBTQ+ people?
- Are American Indians in historical texts portrayed as human beings and members of highly defined and complex societies?
- Do LGBTQ+ characters or non-white characters only exist within the narrative to provide learning opportunities for cisgender and/or heterosexual characters?
- Are sexual/gender minority characters subject to the same expectations of romance and sexuality as their straight/cisgender counterparts?
- Do characters speak in dialect? Does that dialect have a legitimate purpose?
- Is the dialect representative of real-life ways of speaking for certain groups or has it been made up? If it has been made up, does it contain elements of stereotypical or racist depictions from real life?
- Does dialect only come into play with regard to lower class individuals or those with less education?
- How are different languages incorporated into the text?
- If non-English words are used, are they spelled and used correctly?
- Do characters engage in code-switching,[2] and if so, is it done respectfully and effectively?

Accuracy of details and authenticity of values

What are the inaccuracies within the details of the book, if any? Have historical events been changed to suit the narrative? What values are at the heart of the book? How do these values connect to the actual lives of people within the culture? Does this book reflect a specific cultural experience, or could it happen anywhere? As a committee it is necessary to exercise due diligence and research the people, cultures, and situations being portrayed if there is a lack of existing knowledge in the area.

> *The Sydney Taylor committee chair notes, "We definitely rule out books that have actual inaccurate information. Such as a book where they make latkes for Rosh Hashanah. Latkes may be delicious, but within general Jewish observance, no one would be making Latkes for Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year)."*

Additionally, in relation to Science Fiction/Fantasy texts,[3] authors often take great liberties with world-building, especially with how hierarchies and cultures are built, and how race/gender/sexuality play into this—because of this freedom to create worlds that may purport to leave our own culture and history behind, when diversity is present, does it resonate/perpetuate our own cultural norms, and if so why?

Perspectives and power relationships

Whose perspectives and experiences are portrayed? Who is telling the story? Which characters are in roles of power or significance within the book? Who has agency? These questions are important when it comes to portrayals of gender/sexual/racial minority characters and characters with disabilities. Because minorities are sometimes still depicted as unable to exist in their own right, outside of an overarching white/able-bodied/cisgender context, it is useful to be attentive to these dynamics within books under consideration. We do not include these questions in order to prescribe a "correct" way of reading, or to note that there is necessarily a proper way to depict certain characters, but rather to encourage committee members to consider how these depictions may play out in the context of the questions of authenticity noted under *Characters and voice*.

Conclusion

As with so many other questions or concerns that may come up throughout your committee work, you should always feel welcome to reach out to your Oversight liaison. In addition, you or your committee chair should feel free to find experts in particular fields, to ask general questions about things that may not seem authentic or that may seem to fit into a problematic stereotype.

Endnotes

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[1] While the use of Latinx as a term is relatively new, and while we recognize that it is still being debated by scholars and Spanish speakers as an acceptable replacement, we are using it in order to be inclusive of non-binary people. We feel that it is appropriate in this context to avoid the binary that comes from the use of the gendered terms Latino or Latina.

[2] Code-switching, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation." An effective example of this is *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas (2017).

[3] There's often a lack of accountability in these genres to portray races/genders/people with disabilities/LGBTQ+ people respectfully if they are even included at all. The main excuse is "this is a made-up world and in this world, there aren't any [fill in the blank with any minority]" or "in this world, this minority is present, but their culture and dialect are different." Neither excuse addresses that unlike realistic fiction or historical fiction, genres like fantasy, science fiction, and extreme dystopian universes are not made in a vacuum, but are made in our culture, and written by someone influenced by it; with fantasy the "why" questions is all the more important.