

Association for Library Service to Children  
Online Education Course

# The Newbery Medal: Past, Present and Future

Course Syllabus  
Summer 2021  
July 6-August 17, 2021

**Instructor**

Kathleen T. Horning  
Director  
Cooperative Children's Book Center  
University of Wisconsin–Madison  
401 Teacher Education  
225 N. Mills  
Madison, WI 53706  
608-263-3721  
[kt.horning@wisc.edu](mailto:kt.horning@wisc.edu)

**Course Description:** What does it mean when we recommend Newbery Award winners to the children in our communities? Should the ALA seal of approval stand for 100 years? Why is that gold medal often considered the “kiss of death” by kids? How can we help parents and teachers understand what the Newbery Medal is – and isn't? This 6-week asynchronous online course will give participants a solid grounding in the history of the Medal and how it's changed over time; an opportunity to read, discuss and consider past and present Newbery winners with their colleagues from across the nation; and provide suggestions for library programming using Newbery-winning books.

**Goal:**

Participants will gain a deep understanding of the history of the Newbery Medal including its impact and influence in the world of children's literature.

**Observable Objectives:**

1. Students will read and discuss a wide range of Newbery Medal Books
2. Students will read and discuss professional articles about the Newbery Medal
3. Students will learn how the Newbery Medal process has evolved through time.
4. Students will learn about committee service from a former Newbery Committee member.
5. Students will learn about the importance of the Medal from various perspectives.
6. Students will develop ideas and skills for practical programming using Newbery-winning books with children.
7. Students will discuss selection issues related to the inclusion of Newbery Medal books in a school or public library collection.

**Required Reading:** Students will be required to read at least one Newbery award book from each decade, as well as several articles that have been written about the Newbery Medal over time. For each decade, students will have two assigned Newbery books from which to choose. Some students may choose to read both books from the decade and/or do additional reading. All required articles may be downloaded or read directly from the course website. There will be a minimum of 30 hours of outside reading for the course.

**General Policies:** Since this is an asynchronous online class, each student may work in accordance with their own schedule but will be expected to participate fully in the online discussion forums, checking in at least three times a week to read and respond to comments. Our discussions will be based on a combination of required course readings and on the personal and professional experiences adult learners bring to the classroom. In addition, there will be weekly *optional* Zoom sessions for those students who want an opportunity for real-time face-to-face discussion.

### **Student Expectations:**

1. **Online Book Discussion** -- students are expected to log in to the class discussion forums at least three times a week to respond to comments and questions from the instructor and classmates
2. **Readings** – students should plan for a minimum of 30 hours of reading outside of class. The instructor will expect them to broaden their existing Newbery repertoire by reading award winners they haven't already read or by re-reading Newbery books they remember from childhood reading. In addition, each week there will be a few required articles that will provide a context for the era and further information. These articles are all posted on the class website, in addition to a number of supplementary articles to read for more depth.
3. **Badges** -- students earn badges for active participation in the class discussions, and must earn at least one badge per week to qualify for the Certificate of Completion

**CEUs:** At the conclusion of the course, ALSC will send a Certificate of Completion to all students who completed the reading and fully participated in the discussions. This will be the equivalent of 40 hours of work. While ALA is not accredited to offer CEUs, the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training determines 10 hours of learner interaction (time in class, working on assignments, assessments, self-paced learning, etc.) to be the equivalent of one CEU. This generates an estimated 40 hours of contact work, which would translate into 4 CEUs

### **Course Schedule**

July 6-July 12

#### **Week One: In the Beginning**

- Introductions
- How and Why the Newbery Award Got Started
- The First Decade
- The Impact of the Newbery Medal on Children's Book Publishing

#### **Assignments**

Read:

- **From the 1920s:**

*The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* by Hugh Lofting

—or—

*The Trumpeter of Krakow* by Eric P. Kelly

- “The Newbery Medal Books, 1922-1933” by Muriel E. Cann
  - “They Who Get Slapped” by Louise P. Latimer
- Discuss your readings in the online

July 13-19

### **Week Two: Growing Pains**

- Newbery Books of the 1930s and 1940s
- How the Newbery Winner Was Chosen
- Terms and Definitions: What Does Distinguished Mean?
- The Question of Popularity

#### **Assignments**

Read:

- **From the 1930s:**  
*Hitty, Her First Hundred Years* by Rachel Field  
--or--  
*Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol Ryrie Brink
- **From the 1940s:**  
*Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes  
--or--  
*Strawberry Girl* by Lois Lenski
- “The Method of Selecting Newbery and Caldecott Medal Books,” by Irene Smith
- “The Popularity of Newbery Books,” by Mary E. Townes
- “What Are Little Boys Made of?” by C. C. Certain
- “An Open Forum on the Newbery Medal” by C. C. Certain
- “The Newbery Medal: A Plea for Understanding,” by Clara E. Breed

Discuss your readings in the online Forum

July 20-26

### **Week Three: From Romance to Realism**

- Newbery Books of the 1950s and 1960s
- Changes in Attitudes toward Children and Children’s Literature
- Changes in the Newbery Selection Process

#### **Assignments**

Read:

- **From the 1950s:**  
*Ginger Pye* by Eleanor Estes  
--or--  
*Miracles on Maple Hill* by Virginia Lee Sorensen
- **From the 1960s:**  
*It’s Like This, Cat* by Emily Cheney Neville  
--or--  
*From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg
- “Selection of the Newbery-Caldecott Awards,” by Marian Herr
- “The Newbery and Caldecott Awards,” by Elizabeth Burr
- “An Open Letter to John Newbery,” by Doris Ryder Watts
- “Out Where the Real People Are,” by Emily Cheney Neville
- “It’s This Way, Kid!” by David C. Davis

Discuss your readings in the online Forum

July 27-August 2

**Week Four: Who Wins?**

- Newbery Medal Books in the 1970s and 1980s
- Racism, Sexism, and the Newbery Medal
- Genre and the Newbery Medal
- Reconsideration of Some Past Winners
- Serving on the Newbery Committee

**Assignments**

Read:

- **From the 1970s:**

*Sounder* by William H. Armstrong

--or--

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor

- **From the 1980s:**

*A Visit to William Blake's Inn* by Nancy Willard

--or--

*Joyful Noise* by Paul Fleischman

- "The Slave Dancer: Critiques of a Newbery Winner," by Binnie Tate, Lyla Hoffman, Sharon Bell Mathis, and Albert V. Schwartz
- "Sounder: A Black or White Tale" by Albert V. Schwartz
- "Where Do All the Prizes Go? A Case for Nonfiction," by Milton Meltzer

August 3-August 9

**Week 5: The Higher Power of Newbery**

- Newbery Medal Books in the 1990s and 2000s
- What the Newbery Medal Means to Authors, Publishers, Teachers, and Children

**Assignments**

Read:

- **From the 1990s:**

*The Giver* by Lois Lowry

--or--

*Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse

- **From the 2000s:**

*A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park

--or--

*Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* by Laura Amy Schlitz

- "Has the Newbery Lost Its Way?" by Anita Silvey
- "Captain Underpants Doesn't Need a Newbery Medal," by Erica S. Perl
- "The 'Criss Cross' Conundrum," by Karen Cruze
- "Happy Seventy-Fifth Birthday, Newbery Award! Newbery Authors Share Their Thoughts," by Ramona Nolen Kerby
- "That Big Old Gold Sticker: Children Talk about the Newbery Award," by Kathleen T. Horning

Discuss your readings in the online Forum

August 10-August 17

**Week 6: Newbery in the Library... and Beyond**

- Newbery Medal Books of the Past Decade
- Library Programming with Newbery Medal Books
- Mock Newbery Discussions with Adults and Children
- Selection Issues
- What's Ahead for the Newbery Medal?

**Assignments**

- Read: **From the 2010s:**  
*Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña  
--and--  
*The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander  
--or--  
*The New Kid* by Jerry Craft

- “Alive and Vigorous: Questioning the Newbery,” by Martha V. Parravano
- “The Search for Distinguished” by Kathleen T. Horning
- “What Makes a Good Newbery Novel?” by Patricia Gauch
- “And the Newbery Goes to... a Picturebook?” by Mary Schreiber
- “‘New Kid’ Makes History” by Kara Yorio
- “It's All Political: Books, Awards, and Librarianship,” by Allie Jane Bruce

Discuss your readings in the online Forum