

YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
Conference Call
February 29, 2012

Topic: Morris Award Committee Request

Background: YALSA's William C. Morris Award, first given in 2009, celebrates the achievement of a previously unpublished author, or authors, who have made a strong literary debut in writing for young adult readers. The out-going chair of the Morris Award Committee, Teri Lesesne, has worked with YALSA's staff liaison to award committees, Nichole Gilbert, to submit the following request for the board's consideration. The board may also want to consider how this request may impact other award and/or selected list committees.

Action Required: Action

The committee suggests adding new criteria in the 'Eligibility' section of the Morris Award Committees existing Policies & Procedures:

Eligibility

1. The award and honor book winner(s) must be authors of original young adult works of fiction in any genre, nonfiction, poetry, a short story collection, or graphic work.
2. The award winner(s) must not have previously published a book for any audience. Books previously published in another country, however, may be considered if an American edition has been published during the period of eligibility.
3. Works of joint authorship are eligible, but only if all contributors meet all other criteria. For example, graphic works created by an author and an illustrator are eligible, but only if both contributors have never published before.
4. Books must have been published between January 1 and December 31 of the year preceding announcement of the award.
5. Edited works and anthologies are not eligible.
6. The short list may consist of up to five titles.
7. The award may be given posthumously provided the other criteria are met.
8. The winner and short-listed book authors are encouraged to attend an award ceremony following the announcement of the award at ALA's Midwinter Meeting.
9. If during a specific year, no title is deemed sufficiently meritorious, no award will be given that year.
10. The chair, with assistance from designated YALSA staff, is responsible for verifying the eligibility of all nominated titles.
11. To be eligible, a title must have been designated by its publisher as being either a young adult book or one published for the age range that YALSA defines as "young adult," i.e., 12 through 18. Books published for adults or for younger children are not eligible.

Proposed Additions

- To be eligible, a title must be widely available in the US to libraries and teens.
- Titles that are self-published, published only in eBook format, and/or published from a publisher outside of the US will not be considered eligible until the first year the book is available in print through a US publishing house.

Rationale

It is impossible to verify original publication date if a book is self published. According to Morris policies, a book must be published within the calendar year to be eligible. Limiting eligibility to books that have been published by a publishing company removes any ambiguity about eligibility and also keeps things equitable, since it would be impossible to identify any and all eligible self published titles in any/every format. Furthermore, if a book is only available as an eBook, it is not widely available to teens or libraries. Since YALSA lists and awards serve as readers' advisory and collection development tools for libraries, ensuring the book is widely available makes sense.

In an effort to align all of YALSA's book awards and selected lists, this language should be added to all of YALSA's booklists and book awards (except Odyssey, Amazing Audiobooks and Fabulous Films).

This change supports the following areas of YALSA's mission

- Advocates the young adult's right to free and equal access to materials and services, and assists librarians in handling problems of such access.
- Evaluates and promotes materials of interest to adolescents through special services, programs and publications, except for those materials designed specifically for curriculum use (as per ALA Council directive).

Additional Information

- Current Morris Policies & Procedures:
www.ala.org/yalsa/booklistsawards/bookawards/morris/morrispolicy
- YALSA's Mission statement www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/mission&vision/yalsamission