

AN EVALUATION OF THE NEWBERY MEDAL BOOKS

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AN EVALUATION OF THE NEWBERRY MEDAL BOOKS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Problem

The problem of this study is to determine whether or not the Newbery Medal books make a definite contribution to literature for children.

#### Purpose of Study

The writer's purpose in this study has been to make a thorough investigation of the Newbery Medal books to determine if they represent the best literature suitable for children's reading that has been published since 1922, and to investigate carefully the group as a whole to see if the books possess those rare qualities and characteristics which, deservedly, would set them apart from the ordinary type of books usually designated as suitable for children's reading.

#### Limitation of Study

This study will include only the nature, content, and literary merit of the Newbery Medal books published from 1922 to 1947. This study is not experimental and makes

no attempt at an experimental investigation. The evaluation is obtained principally from the opinions of specialists in the field of children's literature.

### Criteria

The following criteria were used in determining the merits of the Newbery Medal books:

1. Authority. Do the authors qualify in education, experience, and background for writing the books? Are the publishers well known, dependable, and specialists in the field?

2. Content and fields of interest. Is the content within the intellectual and emotional experience of the child? Is there a balance among literary types, such as biography, realistic prose, and fanciful prose?

3. Style. Does the style of writing and manner of presentation stimulate and challenge the interest of children? Does a high degree of literary excellence prevail? Are the books well written, with wide choice of words and phrases?

4. Authenticity. Is the material authentic? Are the authors familiar with the time, the place, and the people that make up the background? As the child reads, does he get the feeling that the characters are real, flesh-and-blood human beings? Is the locale described in the books

vivid and realistic?

5. Format. Is the physical make-up of the books satisfactory? Are the illustrations relevant to content? Are they authentic in concepts portrayed, and are they simple and clear in the presentation of the essential details?

The criteria for these conclusions are adapted principally from the study of three books; one on library service in the elementary school;<sup>1</sup> one on children's reading,<sup>2</sup> and one on literature as it is related to the child.<sup>3</sup>

#### Need for Study

Recent discussions of reading material for children have attached great importance to adequate provision for good literature. An understanding of children's interests, likes and dislikes, will provide a means for judging the suitability and worthiness of children's books. Today, children's books are judged not only by definite literary standards, but also by the interest shown by the children as they read the books.

In the writer's opinion, the best way to meet the reading needs of children is to make books available to

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<sup>1</sup> May Lambert Becker, Administering Library Service in the Elementary School.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis M. Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading.

<sup>3</sup> Blanch E. Weeks, Literature and the Child.

them in as large numbers and in as great variety and of as high quality as possible.

It is quite obvious, therefore, that literature for children should conform to the high standards set up by the criteria used in this study.

#### Sources of Data

Data for this study were secured from the reading of excerpts, synopses, content notes, reviews, annotated lists, books dealing with literature for children, and from interviews with educators who are authoritative in the field of children's literature.

This investigation was based upon the consensus of opinion among specialists in the field of literature for children. This was drawn from reviews of books by specialists in the field of literature for children; comments by outstanding critics and editors of publishers who specialize in books for children; viewpoints by educators who are authorities on reading interests for young people; books by authors who have made a study of literature for children; psychologists of children who have expressed their opinions as to what is literature for children, and recommendations from the American Library Association.

#### Procedure

The twenty-six Newbery Medal books have been examined by the writer. A set of criteria by which the books may



be judged has been developed.

Published investigations relating to the books, recommendations made by leading authorities of literature for children, and studies made by various accepted authors in the field of reading have been used to determine the merits of the books.

Certain factors relating to problems in the field of reading have been taken into consideration, and an effort has been made to describe them as related issues to the problem under consideration. A study was made in the field of children's reading interests which has brought to light some findings which are pertinent to this discussion.

The writer distributed questionnaires to various groups of children to discover their interests in the Newbery Medal books.

The conclusions reached in this study were derived through the consensus of opinion among specialists in the field of literature for children and through qualified investigations that have served as a basis for guidance in this study.

#### Definitions

The term "literature" has been used to cover good, wholesome reading matter, as well as reading matter of fine literary quality.

The term 'literature' for children may be regarded as that body of literature old or new,

through which by drawing upon their experiences both emotion and intellectual, children can understand, interpret, enjoy, and therefore appreciate. It is not necessarily a thing apart from literature for adults. The difference lies primarily in the choice and treatment of content. Both can have the same theme and motif. When the theme is developed on the emotional and intellectual level of the adult, when it is treated subjectively rather than objectively, elaborately rather than simply, then it tends to become literature for the adult. When it is developed on the emotional and intellectual level of children, when it reflects the probable experiences of children and childhood, it is likely to be literature for children.<sup>4</sup>

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Ibid., p. 4.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NEWBERY MEDAL BOOKS

#### Rules Governing the Medal

The Newbery Medal originated in 1921 at Swampscott, Massachusetts, in a meeting of the American Library Association. Children's librarians were discussing problems of children's reading with the same serious concern that they give similar problems today. In the list of problems for consideration, these librarians lamented loudly the curse of the comics and too many books. Frederick Melcher, editor of the Publishers Weekly, and always a good friend of children's librarians, heard the discussion. Why, he wondered, should librarians not encourage the writing of more worth while books for children? He suggested that a medal be given annually for the most distinguished book for children published during the preceding year. He would provide the medal, but it would be awarded by the section for Library Work with Children of the American Library Association. His suggestion was greeted with enthusiasm. Since the medal was intended to stimulate American writers, it would be given only for original work by a citizen or resident of the United States. Because creative talent cannot and should not be confined to any pattern, the words "most distinguished" were wisely undefined and unqualified

so that no limitations were placed upon the character of the book.

The first few years the Newbery Medal was chosen by vote of the entire membership of the Section for Library Work with Children. It was felt, however, that a popular vote was not always wisest nor truly representative of the opinion of the country as a whole, so in 1926 the decision was placed in the hands of a smaller committee of judges. The personnel of this committee has changed somewhat from year to year. In 1937 the School Libraries Section was invited to provide five members, but the eighteen members from the Section for Literary Work with Children are still in the majority. These eighteen children's librarians consist of five officers of the Section for Literary Work with Children, five members of the Book Evaluation Committee, the five chairmen of the standing committees, Book Production, International Membership, Professional Training and publicity, and three members at large chosen at the annual meeting of the section. The five school librarians consist of the chairman of the School Libraries Section and four appointed members.

Techniques for voting have varied a little from time to time but follow a general pattern. Usually, the Newbery Medal Committee is organized by Book Week, each member is scouring the fall books for candidates and comparing them with the spring books already known so well from constant

use by children. In January, a poll is taken of the general membership of the School Libraries Section and the Section for Literary Work with Children, each member being asked to "nominate" her choice for the medal. A tabulation of these nominations is sent to the committee members, not so much to influence their decisions, as to call their attention to books they may have overlooked entirely. Although there are a thousand members in the Section for Library Work with Children, there are seldom three hundred members who send in nominations, and the proportion of school librarians who submit nominations is even smaller.

In March, the committee members, having read perhaps five hundred books published, having weighed the values of one book against another, cast their first votes. Once in a while this vote is decisive. More often the committee is asked to vote a second and even a third time, each time on fewer titles. No member knows how any other member votes and every vote has exactly the same weight. No publisher has ever been known to try to exert any pressure on the committee and Mr. Melcher himself holds aloof from the actual voting.<sup>1</sup>

Rene Paul Chambellan, a young American ex-service man, was selected by Mr. Melcher to design the medal. Mr.

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<sup>1</sup>Clara E. Breed, "A Plea for Understanding the Newbery Medal," Library Journal, XVI (May, 1942), 724-725.

Chambellan was an instructor in modeling at the A. E. F. Art Center at Bellevue. He also worked on the dedication panel of the Pershing Stadium at Vincennes. He worked on the New York Building at the Panama Exposition and on many other public buildings and residences.

The medal is made of bronze. On one side are a man with a book, and two children. On the other side are the words, "John Newbery Medal, awarded annually by the Children's Librarians Section of the American Library Association"; in the center is an open book with the caption, "For the Most Distinguished Contribution to American Literature for Children."<sup>2</sup>

#### John Newbery: the Father of Children's Literature

The prize for the best juvenile book of the year is appropriately named after John Newbery, a book seller of London who lived 1713-1766 and who first conceived the idea of publishing books expressly for children. Newbery's famous Juvenile Library was made up of volumes four inches tall, bound in "flowery and gilt" Dutch paper, the secret of the manufacture of which has been lost. Among the titles were The Renowned History of Giles Gingerbread, a boy who lived upon learning; The History of Goody Two

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<sup>2</sup> Muriel E. Cann, The Newbery Medal Books, 1922-1933, p. 7.

Shoes, credited to Oliver Goldsmith, and Tommy Trip and His Dog Jawler, probably by Newbery himself. The Lilliputian Magazine, another Newbery publication, was the first periodical for children.

"The philanthropic publisher of St. Paul's Churchyard"<sup>3</sup> was the title which Goldsmith gave to John Newbery in acknowledgment of financial aid which the book seller gave to many authors in distress. Goldsmith himself and Doctor Samuel Johnson were among his beneficiaries.

John Newbery sold drugs as well as books in his famous bookshop of St. Paul's Churchyard. The particular nostrum for which he was best known was "Doctor James's Celebrated Fever Powder." With shrewd business sense John Newbery inserted in Little Goody Two Shoes a sly advertisement of his medicine.<sup>4</sup>

Newbery's son carried on the business for another generation, moving to the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard and retaining his father's old sign of the "Bible and Sun." This second site of business is now No. 2 Ludgate Circus. The spot is marked today by three life-sized medallions of the faces of John Newbery, Oliver Goldsmith, and Doctor

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<sup>3</sup> Bessie Graham, Famous Literary Prizes and Their Winners, p.38.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

Johnson carved in stone. The fifth generation of Newberys still carries on the apothecary part of the business under the firm name of Francis Newbery and Sons, Ltd., 27 and 28 Charterhouse Square, London.<sup>5</sup>

Charles Welsh wrote the life of John Newbery in A Bookseller of the Last Century and Oliver Goldsmith paid him his last tribute in the following epitaph:

What we say of a thing that has just come in fashion  
And that which we do with the dead,  
Is the name of the honestest man, in the nation.  
What more of a man can be said?<sup>6</sup>

The following list contains the books receiving the Newbery Medal during the years 1922-1947 inclusive.

A List of the Newbery Medal Books

1922.--The Story of Mankind, by Hendrik Willem Van Loon, illustrated by the author. Boni and Liveright.

1923.--The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle, by Hugh Lofting, illustrated by the author. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

1924.--The Dark Frigate, by Charles Boardman Hawes, Little, Brown and Company.

1925.--Tales from Silver Lands, by Charles Joseph Finger. Illustrated by Paul Honore. Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

<sup>5</sup>  
Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid.



1926.--Shen of the Sea, by Arthur Bowie Chrisman, illustrated by Else Hasselriis. E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc.

1927.--Smoky, the Cowhorse, Will James, illustrated by the author. Charles Scribner's Sons.

1928.--Gay Neck, by Dhan Gopal Mukerji, illustrated by Artzybasheff. E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc.

1929.--Trumpeter of Krakow, by Eric P. Kelly, illustrated by Angela Pruszyńska. The Macmillan Company.

1930.--Hitty, Her First Hundred Years, by Rachel Field, illustrated by Dorothy Lathrop. The Macmillan Company.

1931.--The Cat Who Went to Heaven, by Elizabeth Coatsworth, illustrated by Lynd Ward. The Macmillan Company.

1932.--Waterless Mountain, by Laura Adams Armer, illustrated by the author. Longmans, Green and Company.

1933.--Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze, by Elizabeth Foreman Lewis, illustrated by Kurt Wiese. John C. Winston Company.

1934.--Invincible Louisa, by Cornelia Meigs. Little, Brown and Company.

1935.--Dobry, by Monica Shannon, illustrated by Atanas Katchamakoff. Viking Press.

1936.--Caddie Woodlawn, by Carol Brink, illustrated by Kate Seredy. The Macmillan Company.

1937.--Roller Skates, by Ruth Sawyer, illustrated by Valenti Angelo. Viking Press.

1938.--The White Stag, by Kate Seredy, illustrated by the author. Viking Press.

1939.--Thimble Summer, by Elizabeth Enright, illustrated by the author. Farrar and Rhinehart.

1940.--Daniel Boone, by James Daughtery, illustrated by the author. Viking Press.

1941.--Call It Courage, by Armstrong Sperry, illustrated by the author. The Macmillan Company.

1942.--The Matchlock Gun, by Walter D. Edwards, illustrated by Paul Lantz. Dodd, Mead Company.

1943.--Adam of the Road, by Elizabeth Janet Gray, illustrated by Robert Lawson. Viking Press.

1944.--Johnny Tremain, by Esther Forbes, illustrated by Lynd Ward. Houghton Mifflin Company.

1945.--Rabbit Hill, by Robert Lawson, illustrated by the author. Viking Press.

1946.--Strawberry Girl, by Lois Lenski, illustrated by the author. Lippincott.

1947.--Miss Hickory, by Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, illustrated by Ruth Gannet. Viking Press.

#### The Authors of the Newbery Medal Books

The authors of the Newbery Medal books represent a group of writers of undisputed merit and popularity, who have enriched the imagination of youth with their writings. There are some who have searched through unrecorded folklore and others who have carried on their research through

direct acquaintance with children.

The Junior Book of Authors was the source for some of the following biographical sketches. To be read today and to be worth reading were the qualifications for admission to the pages of this book. It by no means includes all who are of undisputed merit and popularity. Many new authors have joined the ranks since the book was published. These sketches are not intended as literary criticism, but to import those personal attitudes of the distinguished writers of children's books, and to directly give insight into trends of production, circumstances and background for writing the books.

Hendrick William Van Loon, who was the first to receive the John Newbery Medal in 1922 for his Story of Mankind, was born in Rotterdam, Holland, on January 14, 1882. As a child he grew up among books in his father's library where he read books beyond his years. Van Loon is a graduate of Cornell and has a doctor's degree from Munich, Germany. During the first World War he was correspondent from the United Press in various European countries. The Story of Mankind was intended as a part of a twelve volume history of the world but later was condensed in his History of Man-<sup>7</sup>kind. Van Loon wrote the book in the manner in which he

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<sup>7</sup> Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, Junior Book of Authors, p. 366.

believed history should be taught. In spite of the misgivings that preceded its publication, the book has become popular.

Hugh Lofting, author of The Doctor Dolittle Stories, was born January 14, 1886, in Maidenhead, England. He came to America and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1904-1905. In 1912 he settled in the United States but soon returned to England to enter the British Army during the first World War.<sup>8</sup>

He began sending illustrated letters and little stories to his children from the trenches in France. There seemed very little of interest to write to youngsters from the front; but one thing drew his attention, and that was the part animals were playing in the war. All the resources of surgery were brought into play when a soldier was injured, but a wounded horse was put to death. Obviously, developing a horse-surgery as good as that of the clearing stations would necessitate a knowledge of horse language. That was the beginning of the idea: an eccentric country physician with a bent for natural history and a great love for pets. This combination gave inspiration for the letters to his children. It delighted them, and at his wife's suggestion, he decided to put the letters into book form for other boys and girls. The second Doctor Dolittle

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Ibid., p. 239.

book, The Voyage of Doctor Dolittle, received the Newbery Medal in 1923.

Charles Boardman Hawes was of New England stock. Born at Clifton Springs, New York, in 1889, he was brought up at Bangor, Maine, where the woods, hills, and sea instilled within him an early love of nature. He attended Bowdoin College and Harvard University. After graduating, he went to Boston and accepted a position on the editorial staff of the Youth's Companion.<sup>9</sup>

His love for the sea was deepened and he haunted wharves, talked to seasoned seamen, collected charts, browsed in marine museums, finally assembling a private library of his own. This was the background for his sea yarns. His first book was The Mutineers; his second book, The Great Quest, and his other work, The Dark Frigate, were published serially in "The Open Road" before they appeared in book form.<sup>10</sup>

Charles Hawes died suddenly at the age of thirty-four years, on July 15, 1923. After his death, in 1924, the John Newbery Medal was awarded for his Dark Frigate as the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.<sup>11</sup>

England was the birthplace of Charles J. Finger. He was born in Willesden, England, December 25, 1871. He

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.153.

was educated at private schools and at King's College, London. For a time he studied music at Frankfort-on-the-Main, Germany.

At the age of sixteen he left England in search of adventure. He served before the mast, traveling to South America, Africa, and the Antarctic. For three years he was director of the Conservatory of Music at Los Angeles, California.

His book, Tales from Silver Lands, was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1925. He has transcribed legendary stories of South America which are based on his own adventures with the Indians in that country. His book Courageous Companions won the two thousand dollar Longmans, Green prize for the best adventure story of 1929.<sup>12</sup>

Arthur Bowie Chrisman was born in Virginia, July 16, 1889. His ancestors made the first permanent settlement west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He studied electrical engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Later, he went to California and while there served as an extra in the movies, as farmer, lecturer, story-teller, and school teacher.

While working on an oriental character in one of his stories, he went into a Chinese shop to inquire about foods the character should eat. This led to an acquaintanceship

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<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., p. 87.

with a Chinese gentleman who gave him information for his first book, Shen of the Sea, which was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1926. He has written only two books; yet he is among the best-known of modern writers for young people.<sup>13</sup>

Will James was born in a covered wagon on a bleak hillside in Montana, June 6, 1892. His background is different from that of other writers of the Newbery Medal books. When he was about four years of age, his parents died and he was adopted by a French Canadian trapper. He lived in northwestern Canada for fourteen years. One day the trapper failed to return home and Will had to live upon his own resources. For twelve years he wandered through the United States, earning a reputation as an expert rider, catching wild horses. It was when he was injured by a vicious horse that he began to write magazine sketches of cowboy life of the West as he had known it, using the language of the cowboy.

His book Smoky, the Cowhorse received the Newbery Medal in 1927. The story is real, convincing, humorous, and full of truth and reveals keen powers of observation on the part of the author.<sup>14</sup>

Ghan Gopal Mukerji's home stood on the edge of a jungle in a small village near Calcutta, India. He was

<sup>14</sup>  
Ibid., p.88.

<sup>15</sup>  
Ibid., p. 202.

born July 6, 1890, and lived with his grandfather, father, mother, and seven older brothers and sisters. They were Brahmins, the priest caste of India, who had charge of the village temple. At fourteen he was initiated into the priesthood. He soon realized this did not satisfy his hunger for knowledge and at eighteen he entered the University of Calcutta. When he was twenty he broke the ties of caste and came to America and attended Leland Stanford University in California.

After an absence of twelve years he journeyed back to India. The sights and sounds of his native land made him resolve to picture life in India for boys and girls in America so there could be a better understanding between the nations. Returning to America, he settled in New Milford, Connecticut, and began to write books for young people. His book Gay Neck was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1928.<sup>15</sup> The Horn Book for July-August, 1937, was published in special honor of Dhan Gopal Mukerji, who died July 14, 1936.

Eric Philbrook Kelly, author of Trumpeter of Krakow, was born in Amesbury, Massachusetts on March 16, 1884. His family moved to Denver, Colorado, during his early childhood. Later, the family returned to Amesbury, and Eric

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<sup>15</sup>  
Ibid., p. 269.



attended Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. He was engaged in newspaper work until 1918 when he went to France as a relief worker among the Polish legions. After the war he lived and studied for three years in Poland. In 1925 and 1926 he taught and studied for three years in Poland at the University of Krakow. It was at this time he wrote the Trumpeter of Krakow, for which he received the Newbery Medal in 1929.

The Trumpeter of Krakow was not written especially for children. Having been trained on the staff of a newspaper, Eric Kelly had been taught to write his story as simply as he could; and unconsciously his first book is in this form.<sup>16</sup>

Rachel Field was one of the most famous writers for children of the present day. She was born in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, September 19, 1894. She attended Radcliffe College, and after graduation, held several editorial jobs. Her first book for children was one of verse, The Pointed People, which is illustrated with her own drawings. Her most famous story for children is Hitty: Her First Hundred Years, which was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1930. Rachel Field said, in accepting the Newbery Medal, "Nothing was farther from my mind than writing

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Ibid., p. 209.

the autobiography of a doll until I discovered the doll one day in an antique shop in New York City."<sup>17</sup>

Authorities on young people's literature have called Hitty a true juvenile classic.

Rachel Field died in her forty-eighth year, March 15, 1942.

Elizabeth Coatsworth was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1893, where she spent her childhood, except for long trips with her parents to various parts of the United States and Europe. After graduating from Vassar, she spent a year in the Orient. She stayed at old Buddhist monasteries and it was here she gathered the material for her book The Cat Who Went to Heaven, a beautiful Japanese legend that won the 1931 Newbery Medal.

Elizabeth Coatsworth is an able critic and writes many interesting reviews of children's books for leading magazines.<sup>18</sup>

Louise Adams Armer says her birth certificate is recorded on January 12, 1874, in Sacramento, California.<sup>19</sup> From the age of nineteen to twenty-four she studied drawing and painting at the California School of Design in San Francisco. She has spent some time in the Navaho Reservation in northern Arizona where she painted pictures

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<sup>17</sup>  
Ibid., p.148.

<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid., p.90.

<sup>19</sup>  
Ibid., p.90.

of Indian life. Her book, Waterless Mountain, was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1932. It also received the Longmans, Green Company's Second Juvenile Fiction prize of two thousand dollars.

Elizabeth Forman Lewis was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and was educated there and in New York.<sup>20</sup> In 1917 she went to China and worked in Shanghai in the offices of the Mission Board during the day and taught religious classes in the evenings. Then she spent a year in Chunking, the scene of Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze, the 1933 Newbery Medal book.

"Young Fu is not a real boy, but an imaginary character who represents," Elizabeth Lewis says, "all that is typical of the Chinese youth of today." She wrote: "Youth, regardless of race or color, is much the same the world over, and if I had any one predominating desire in writing this tale of young Fu, it was that the youth of America might recognize in the youth of China the kinship to themselves."<sup>21</sup>

Cornelia Meigs was born in Rock Island, Illinois, and lived most of her life in the Middle West. She grew up in a story-telling family. Her first writing was done while she was teaching in a private school in Davenport, Iowa, where she told her stories to children and listened

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<sup>20</sup>  
Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>21</sup>  
Ibid., p. 234.

to their criticisms.

At the annual conference of the American Library Association, held in Montreal in June, 1934, Cornelia Meigs was awarded the Newbery Medal for her biography of Louisa Alcott, Invincible Louisa. Few writers for children have received such consistent praise for all their books. Her stories are historically accurate and delightful in plot and character.<sup>22</sup>

Monica Shannon, a Californian, was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1935 for her book Dobry, the story of a Bulgarian peasant boy. Dobry is a rare and distinguished book that gives older boys and girls a sense of what the land means to the people who live on it.<sup>23</sup>

Carolyn Brink was born in 1895, in Idaho and was educated in western colleges. Caddie Woodlawn, the Newbery award in 1936, was based upon stories told by her grandmother who was "Caddie" in the story. The story is rich in background and accurate in the life of the times.

Carolyn Brink has written short stories for boys and girls which have appeared in well-known children's magazines.

Ruth Sawyer has written the story of her own childhood

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Ibid., p. 254.

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Frances Sayers, "Monica Shannon Wins Newbery Award," Publishers' Weekly, CXXIX (June, 1936), 2419.

in her book, Roller Skates, which won the Newbery Medal in 1937. Its second honor was a place among the "Fifty Best Books of 1936."<sup>24</sup>

Kate Seredy was born in Hungary and grew up in Budapest. She is well known for her illustrations. She came to America in 1922 and has lived here ever since. The most distinguished book of which she is the author-illustrator is The White Stag, an epic tale of Hungary. This book was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1938.<sup>25</sup>

Elizabeth Enright was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1939 for her book Thimble Summer. Although Chicago born, Elizabeth has spent most of her life in New York City, within walking distance of Washington Square. In her book, Thimble Summer, her writings and illustrations turn for the first time to American scenes. The key to this successful story is the combination of the good yarn with the mysterious and mystic interpretation of life.<sup>26</sup>

James Daugherty's first years were spent on an Indiana farm. It was from his grandfather that he heard tall stories of Daniel Boone and his buckskin men, handed down

<sup>24</sup> D. S. Patee, "Awarded the John Newbery Medal for the Best Children's Book of 1935," Publishers' Weekly, CXXIX (May 16, 1936), 1954.

<sup>25</sup> Frances Sayers, "Kate Seredy Wins Newbery Medal," op. cit., (April-June, 1938), 2355.

<sup>26</sup> Rosemary Benet, "Thimble Summer," Publishers' Weekly, CXXXIV (April-June, 1939), 2224.

by word of mouth and not out of books.

James Daugherty has written his text for the superb drawings he has made for Daniel Boone, the Newbery Medal book for 1940. He has been able to interpret the American historical scene in terms of modern art.<sup>27</sup>

The Newbery Medal for "the most distinguished contribution to American books for children" in 1941 was awarded to Armstrong Sperry, author and illustrator of Call It  
<sup>28</sup>  
Courage. Two special qualifications make Armstrong Sperry outstanding among the many notable writers of children's books. One is his unusual and authentic South Sea subject matter; another is the fact that he is both writer and artist.

Sperry was born in Connecticut in 1897. As a boy he listened to yarns of the wonderful South Sea Islands as they were told to him by his great-grandfather. In later years he spent some time on the islands he had dreamed about as a boy. He has tried to communicate to his readers the great courage of the little band of Polynesians who set about to rebuild their world after its destruction.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Maxine Black, Editor, Current Biography (1940), p. 221.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., (1941), p. 813.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., (1942), p. 233.

Walter Dumaux Edmonds was born July 15, 1903, in Boonville, New York. His first attempt at writing for young people was The Matchlock Gun, which was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1942. This fine story is truly an event in the world of books for juveniles. Walter Edmonds has written other stirring, historical stories. The colorful Mohawk Valley region is the scene of The Matchlock  
 30  
Gun.

Adam of the Road, winner of the Newbery Medal for 1943, was written by Elizabeth Janet Gray. She was born in Germantown in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on October 6, 1902. Since her family was Quaker, Elizabeth attended Germantown Friends School. She entered Bryn Mawr College before she had reached her seventeenth birthday. Her book Adam of the Road arose out of her husband's study of the metrical romance for his degree many years before. The subject interested her, and from the notes she had made, she later  
 31  
 wrote "Adam."

Ester Forbes, author of Johnny Tremain, was awarded the John Newbery Medal in 1944. It was during the research for her book Paul Revere that she created the character Johnny Tremain, a boy whom readers believe in and understand.

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30  
Ibid., (1943), p. 249.

31  
 Maxine Black, op. cit., p. 250.

Johnny Tremain will find himself for many long years to come among the same alive and immortal boys as those created by Charles Dickens and Mark Twain.<sup>32</sup>

Robert Lawson, author of Rabbit Hill, has illustrated some forty books and written seven in the years from 1830 to 1945. He first gained national fame for illustrations which accompanied Burno Leaf's Ferdinand in 1945.

Robert Lawson is a shy man who likes to work in a lovely garden and enjoy all the little animals about the place, such as "Porky the Woodchuck, Willie the Field Mouse, and Phewie the Skunk." His own home today, "Rabbit Hill," is near Westport, Connecticut. He was born October 4, 1892, in New York City.<sup>33</sup>

Lois Lenski began her literary career by being an illustrator and then found the ability to write the text to fit the pictures. She has written a series of contemporary regional stories which give their young readers a glimpse into the unfamiliar lives of youngsters of their own age in out-of-the-way corners of our country.

Strawberry Girl won the Newbery Medal in 1946. Lois Lenski has used her gift for catching the flavor and drama

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A. M. Jordan, "Ester Forbes, Newbery Winner," Horn Book, XX (July, 1944), 267.

33

Maxine Black, op. cit., p. 320.



of life in a remote corner of America, the flatwoods in Florida, and worked them into this book. The author was born in Springfield, Ohio, where she spent her childhood. In 1915 she was graduated from the Ohio State University with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education.<sup>34</sup>

Carolyn Sherwin Bailey was born in New York state, at Hoosick Falls. She was educated at home for the first fourteen years of her life by her mother who had been a teacher and writer. After a period of teaching, she went into social work, then came a period of travel and study in Europe. Her first books were compilations of folk stories, home stories, all related to subjects in school and kindergarten.<sup>35</sup>

Carolyn Bailey and her husband took up apple orcharding as a career in New Hampshire. Since the death of her husband, she has assumed all responsibility of the orchard. It was out of her devotion to this orchard that Miss Hickory was created. The sharp bite of good New England apples is in its prose. "Miss Hickory" is a country woman whose body was an applewood twig and whose head was a hickory nut.

The Newbery Medal for Miss Hickory was presented to

<sup>34</sup>  
R. W. G. Vail, "Lois Lenski, Newbery Winner for 1946," Publishers' Weekly, CLIX (April-June, 1946), 2235.

<sup>35</sup>  
Frances Clark Sayers, "Carolyn Sherwin Bailey Wins the Newbery Medal," Publishers' Weekly, CLII (July 25, 1947), 38.

Carolyn Bailey at a meeting held Wednesday evening, July 2, 1947, in San Francisco, California. The awarding of the medal was an appropriate recognition for a genuine piece of literature.

### The Illustrators

Eminent artists have contributed their abilities in making the Newbery Medal books distinguished and inviting. The illustrations have enriched and expanded the author's meaning and have added immeasurably to the delight of the children who have read them. In every instance the artist has caught the atmosphere of the story and has done nothing which is out of harmony with the scenes portrayed by the author.

An acquaintance of some of the artists who have illustrated the Newbery books is necessary to understand their contribution to children's literature. The artists have succeeded in making their contribution to books not only as important as the text but also have kept a delightful attitude of seeing things as children see them. Eleven of the books analyzed in this study were illustrated by their authors.

The following biographical sketches are necessarily brief but offer a means of acquaintance with other artists who have contributed to the Newbery books.

Paul Honore, muralist and maker of wood blocks, has

become a national figure, particularly in the latter field, and his two, three and four color wood-block prints adorn some of the recent books. His best illustrations are seen in his illustrations for Charles Joseph Finger's books whose highwaymen, bandits, and vivid folk people of the Andes make a strong appeal to his imagination. The color blocks in Tales from Silver Lands, by Charles Finger, are considered among the finest in contemporary books. The wood cuts are alive and warm in color and well suited to the book.<sup>36</sup>

Elsie Hasselriis was born in Skine, Denmark. Even as a small child she showed great talent for drawing. She illustrated Shen of the Sea by Arthur Bowie Chrisman which won the Newbery Medal in 1926.

Elsie Hasselriis received her art education in Copenhagen. Although she is a successful painter, it is her silhouettes which have won her recognition both in Europe and in the United States. She has exhibited some of her silhouettes, consisting of illustrations for books and for old folk songs, designs for book-plates and decorative panels in New York.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>  
Bertha E. Mahoney and Elinor Whitney, Compilers, Contemporary Illustrators of Children's Books, p. 38.

<sup>37</sup>  
Ibid., p. 137.

Boris Artzybasheff, illustrator of Gay Neck by Dhan Gopal Mukerji, was born in Karkoff, Central Ukraine, in 1899.<sup>38</sup> The son of a famous Russian novelist, his boyhood life was spent in the country where he observed peasant types and customs. He came to New York and worked on a newspaper, and within a short while was making distinguished books.

The illustrations which Boris Artzybasheff did for Ghond the Hunter in 1924 and Gay Neck in 1927 were selected by the American Institute of Graphic Arts as among the best of their respective years. His work has brought distinction to children's books published in America.

His monkeys, elephants, and strange birds of India are treated decoratively, yet convey their chief characteristics.

The illustrations for The Trumpeter of Krakow were made in Poland by Angela Pruskynska. The pictures in this book were drawn within keeping of the historical background. Angela Pruskynska studied old volumes owned by the University of Krakow in portraying the dress, architecture, and customs of their country during the fifteenth century. The decorations are in style of the Wit Stwosz altar pieces of the Church of Our Lady Mary.<sup>39</sup>

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Ibid., p. 4.

39

Muriel E. Cann, The Newbery Medal Books, p. 27.

Dorothy Lanthrop, an American illustrator, is distinguished for the delicacy and imaginative quality of her pictures, and for her drawings of animals and children. In the book Hitty, Dorothy Lanthrop reveals her power as collaborator with the author, Rachel Field. The illustrations are an integral part of the book. She has contributed greatly as will be proved by the combined emotions of delight and admiration produced by the pictures. Dorothy Lanthrop has created a lovable doll and clothed her in prints that are quaint.

Lynd Ward is known for his wood cuts, although he makes use of many mediums in both adult and children's book illustrations. He was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1905. From high school he went to Teachers College to major in the Fine Arts Department. He later studied in the Academy for Graphic Arts in Leipzig, Germany.

Lynd Ward illustrated The Cat Who Went to Heaven by Elizabeth Coatsworth. The illustrations are so closely connected with the subject matter that they might almost be painted by the poor Japanese artist in the story. His pictures are in pen and ink drawings, and in the spirit of Japanese brush drawings.<sup>40</sup>

Kurt Wiese, a German artist now living in America,

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<sup>40</sup>  
Bertha E. Mahoney and Elinor Whitney, op. cit.,  
p. 74.

has written and illustrated several books for children. He has lived in China where he learned the export trade. While there he was captured by the Japanese during a revolution and handed over to the British who sent him to Australia as a prisoner of war. His illustrations of Young Fu of the Upper Yangtse, by Elizabeth Lewis, show a definite knowledge of the Chinese people.<sup>41</sup>

Atanas Katchamakoff, well known sculptor, who was a peasant boy in Bulgaria, has illustrated Dobry, by Monica Shannon. The illustrations have power and beauty and show real feeling for the peasant life of his childhood.<sup>42</sup>

Valentin Angelo was born in Massarosa, Tuscany, Italy, but now lives in New York. The illustrations by Valentin Angelo in Ruth Sawyer's book Roller Skates are typical of the spirited little girl, Lucinda.<sup>43</sup>

Paul Lantz, a distinguished young American artist, has illustrated The Matchlock Gun by Walter Edmonds.<sup>44</sup> He has made beautiful lithographic drawings, some in four colors, others in richly-toned black.

Ruth Gannett has illustrated the 1947 Newbery Medal book, Miss Hickory. She has caught in her illustrations all the subtlety of feeling, as well as the humor and the poetry of the text.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.,77.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

## Publishers

Bookmaking in the twentieth century has received considerable attention. This has been shown by the increase of the number of beautiful books for children. Leading publishers have set up standards in the production of children's books since the John Newbery Medal awards have been given. Publishers have established special departments for planning and producing books for children with specialists in the field of children's literature.

Publishers of the Newbery Medal books have carried on John Newbery's tradition in giving wonder and delight today through books lovely in content and appearance, and full of lasting memories to children.

Miriam Blanton Huber, in commenting on this point, says: "The pleasing appearance of a page, the texture of paper, and binding, the 'satisfying feel' of the book in hand are not accidental nor are they the result of mechanical skill alone."<sup>45</sup> Designing of the format of a book is a creative process, and a design of beauty is the work of an artist. The first principle in all good design is fitness to the purpose. A book is intended to be read; therefore, legibility in children's books is of paramount importance. Harmony of workmanship that produces a beautiful

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<sup>45</sup> Miriam Blanton Huber, Story and Verse for Children, p. 19.

book is the result of much care and thoughtful planning.

Children observe books first from a physical point of view, and if handled by them, they are remembered in connection with certain shapes, colors and style which can hardly be separated from their contents.

Surrounded with beautiful books, children will cultivate them as friends; books of an inferior quality soon begin to annoy them.

#### Subject Matter

The Newbery Medal books cover a variety of themes. The titles do not always reveal the nature of the story as in some of the popular books of inferior quality. They require some explanation and reading of content before the theme is known. The chapter headings assist the reader in pointing out the trend of the stories.

Twenty-three of the Newbery Medal books are classified as books of fiction; and three are classified as non-fiction in the Children's Catalogue, a guide to determine the classification of books, issued by the H. W. Wilson Company.

Eleven of the Newbery Medal books have stories with foreign settings; thirteen have settings with American scenes which are familiar to American children; five have stories with animal characters; five deal with legendary history; one is a history or reference type of book; two are biographies.

Stories with foreign settings.--The following Newbery



Medal books have foreign settings:

Voyages of Doctor Dolittle - Hugh Lofting

Tales from Silver Lands - Charles Finger

Shen of the Sea - Arthur Bowie Chrisman

Gay Neck - Dhan Gopal Mukerji

The Trumpeter of Krakow - Eric P. Kelly

The Cat Who Went to Heaven - Elizabeth Coatsworth

Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze River - Elizabeth Lewis

Dobry - Monica Shannon

The White Stag - Kate Seredy

Call It Courage - Armstrong Sperry

Adam of the Road - Elizabeth Janet Gray

The Dark Frigate - Charles Hawes

Stories with American settings.--The following list of books have American settings:

Smoky, the Cowhorse - Will James

Hitty: Her First Hundred Years - Rachel Field

Waterless Mountain - Laura Adams Armer

Invincible Louisa - Caroline Meigs

Caddie Woodlawn - Carol Ryrie Brink

Roller Skates - Ruth Sawyer

Thimble Summer - Elizabeth Enright

Daniel Boone - James Daugherty

Strawberry Girl - Lois Lenski

Miss Hickory - Carolyn Sherwin Bailey

Stories with animal characters.--Five of the Newbery

Medal books use animal characters.

Doctor Dolittle - Hugh Lofting

Smoky, the Cowhorse - Will James

Gay Neck - Dhan Gopal Mukerji

The Cat Who Went to Heaven - Elizabeth Coatsworth

Rabbit Hill - Robert Lawson

Stories with historical legends.--The following books are built around historical legends:

Waterless Mountain - Laura Adams Armer

The Cat Who Went to Heaven - Elizabeth Coatsworth

The Trumpeter of Krakow - Eric P. Kelly

The White Stag - Kate Seredy

Shen of the Sea - Arthur Bowie Chrisman

Stories about important men and women.--Some of the Newbery Medal books center about important men and women.

Invincible Louisa - Cornelia Meigs

Daniel Boone - James Daugherty

The following is a brief summary of some of the books representative of the groupings as listed above.

The use of a foreign setting in the Newbery Medal books is a characteristic that is evident upon examining the books. The authors have a knowledge of the country and their impressions are accurate. They show a sympathetic understanding of the people and their customs. This group of books provides for adventure and exploration of important countries and little-known places.

The setting for Gay-Neck, by Dhan Mukerji, is in India. Gay Neck is a pigeon which is trained for service in the first World War. The author has put all of the mysticism of India into the story. He has also painted a true picture of a pigeon's training. There is a spirit of adventure when Gay Neck has hair-breadth escapes from hawks, eagles, and airplanes. Winged animals and man are brothers-- that is the message that Dhan Mukerji brings to his reader.

Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze, by Elizabeth Lewis, has China as its setting. Young Fu is a Chinese boy who serves as an apprentice to a coppersmith in Chungking. He is rewarded for his courage and loyalty by being adopted by his master. Young Fu learns to overcome many difficulties as he comes in contact with bandits, soldiers, artisans, and scholars in the crowded city.

Dobry, by Monica Shannon, is a peasant boy who grew up in Bulgaria, a country where there was plenty of food, where there was play, where festivals were held and the whole village participated. Dobry did not want to be a farmer and work in his father's fields, for he had other plans. He wanted to be a sculptor. He won his mother's consent and was sent to an art school in Sofia. Monica Shannon has opened a gateway into another land for her young readers of Dobry.

Stories with American settings and with early historical background make history real and vivid to young

people. The Newbery Medal books of historical fiction have brought a fresh realization that flesh and blood men and women lived in the past and lived lives as real to them as ours are to us. These books possess historical accuracy and literary merit.

Caddie Woodlawn is a story of frontier days in Wisconsin. Caddie has been allowed to grow into a tom-boy. At twelve, she is a child of spirit and finds life exciting. The Woodlawns lived in a sturdy home and not in a log cabin. There is humor in the book, including the story of the sheep which ate the eighty glass buttons from the dress of the cousin from Boston. Carol Brink's story gives a complete picture of early days in Wisconsin; the incidents and setting of the story are authentic.

A stirring story of young American courage is the Matchlock Gun by Walter Edmonds. The story is about a small boy, Edward, a smaller sister, their mother, and an antique matchlock gun. New York state was still a British colony, and the French and Indians were still raiding the Dutch homes. Young Edward was left at home to guard his family, while the father went to watch for marauding Indians. Edward daringly turned the huge matchlock gun on some Indians who came creeping through the dusk. This story shows American boys and girls in a realistic manner, and reveals the courageous part young people of their own age played in the making of America.

The setting for Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes is in Boston, 1773. Johnny Tremain was a boy of fourteen years of age and was apprenticed to a silversmith. One day his right hand was burned by molten silver. This led him to seek other employment because his hand had become useless. He became a dispatch rider where he met John and Sidney Adams and other Boston patriots. The dramatic events of the Tea Party and Battle of Lexington soon took place. Two years of history are thus portrayed through the eyes of this observant boy.

Of equal importance from this group of books are stories concerned with the present day child life in this country. Thimble Summer by Elizabeth Enright is the story of an everyday little girl on an everyday farm. The scenes are familiar to childhood; her playing in the mud, sliding in the hay, and helping mother and father. Garnet, the little girl in the story, found a silver thimble in a dried-up river bed. When the rains came and saved the crops, Garnet believed that the thimble was a kind of talisman. Her friends were an assortment of country personalities, and many of her adventures sprang from the natural happenings in a summer spent on a farm. This story is natural and is from the author's own experiences on a Middle Western farm.

The regional story, Strawberry Girl, by Lois Lenski is a story about Birdie Boyer, the little girl of a large "strawberry" family and the Slater family who resented the

Boyers. The Setting is in the Florida flat lands where the people were sometimes called "crackers." Birdie, the strawberry girl, dreamed of an education that would include playing the organ. In Strawberry Girl, Lois Lenski has interpreted an unfamiliar American scene to boys and girls.

Children respond to books which have animals as the leading characters. Some of the authors have responded to this type of creative writing.

Doctor Dolittle by Hugh Lofting is the story of a kind-hearted doctor who loved animals and understood their language. He had pets all over his house and garden. He had a call from the monkeys in Africa, suffering from an epidemic, and the doctor set sail at once. The story is delightful nonsense with subtle nursery humor -- a book to read for fun.

Smoky, the Cowhorse by Will James pictures cowboy life in the West. This book stands out among horse stories. The story is in cowboy language. Will James wrote the story in the language he learned from a trapper. This story perhaps holds the same place for this generation of young people that Black Beauty held for earlier generations.

Several of the Newbery Medal books include historical legends. Some of these legends are related by story-tellers who are characters in the story. Some of the stories deal with legendary history entirely.

The Trumpeter of Krakow relates the legendary history of Poland during the fifteenth century. Central Europe and Asia had fought over the Great Tarnov Crystal. This crystal had been entrusted to a courageous Pole who took it into Krakow for safety. Eric Philbrook Kelly has given a vivid description of the Church of Our Lady Mary which stood as a protection against robbers and the savage Tartar tribes. The sound of the hymnal played by the trumpeter each hour from the windows of the church tower symbolized the loyalty of the country to Poland.

The epic story of the migration of the Huns and Magyars is related by Kate Seredy's White Stag. Inspired by the memories of the legends she had listened to in her childhood, Kate Seredy has trailed the White Stag of legendary fame from the tomb of Nimrod to the Hungarian Plains.

Shen of the Sea, a series of Chinese stories by Arthur Chrisman, consists of tales of Chinese life. The tales are amusing, with a touch of old age wisdom of the Chinese. Ah Mee discovered printing by smearing jam; Ah Tcha, the sleeper, discovered tea to keep him awake. The author has truly caught the spirit of Chinese life and thought.

Biographical writing is an old form of writing, but modern writers have recognized it as a literary form of major importance. Adolescents enjoy reading biographical fiction, whereas they would shun biography written as

non-fiction. Two biographies appear in the above list. These are skilfully written biographies and especially designed for children.

The reception given to Invincible Louisa by Cornelia Meigs is accounted for by the interest in Little Women. Cornelia Meigs has produced an interesting account of the life of Louisa May Alcott. This book will help children to become better acquainted with this famous writer.

Daniel Boone by James Daugherty is a stirring account of this dynamic character whose life and adventures are an inspiration to young Americans.



### CHAPTER III

#### AN EVALUATION OF THE NEWBERY MEDAL BOOKS

Until a few years ago books for children were read for their ulterior ends. They were appraised for their moralistic trends, physical age limit, or collateral reading value; for anything but as books in relation to books in general.

In evaluating the Newbery Medal books the writer made use of every available source of information obtainable, and did some research in the Stephen J. Hay School in Dallas, where she serves as librarian.

In comparison to the sources of information to be found in many of the fields of literary endeavor, very little has been written about the Newbery books. Aids available, however, are of several kinds and from several sources.

Consultation of book reviews and annotations was one method used for determining the value of the Newbery Medal books as a contribution to children's literature. Specialists in this field have given scholarly reviews that treated the more literary elements, with some attention to those factors which aid in determining the value of the books. The signature of the reviewers have stamped

authority and have served as a guide to the reader.

Periodicals present reviews and annotations of books that represent the opinions of competent persons in the field of children's literature. These aids may be grouped into several types: (1) trades lists; (2) periodicals, both general and professional; (3) newspapers; (4) lists issued by state departments, and (5) those issued for specific purposes, such as lists for topics and for professional book selection.

Useful reviews and annotations have been examined in the following publications: Horn Book is a quarterly edited by Bertha Mahoney and is devoted entirely to books for children. This book contains criticism and information about style of writing, illustrating, sales and distribution of books. Saturday Review of Literature is an outstanding reviewing journal of literature. There is a department called "Children's Bookshelf" which reviews books for young people. Elementary English Journal represents a variety of expert opinions regarding books, judgment of teachers of English, and special teachers of reading. Publisher's Weekly is edited by Frederic Melcher, the founder of Children's Book Week, which is observed in November. He fosters an interest in young people's books by sponsoring reliable and authoritative reviews. Book Review Digest is a publication which appears monthly with

cumulations in August and February. This aid is an unbiased digest of reviews of each book and contains excerpts from favorable and unfavorable opinions expressed by critics in eighty of the leading reviewing journals. New York Herald Tribune and New York Times often include excellent reviews. The New York Herald Tribune has a section titled, "Books," and reviews books for young people. The New York Times Book Review contains a section called "New Books for Boys and Girls," edited by Ann T. Eaton. These newspapers are helpful in evaluating books.

Two especially good sources as a guide for book selection are The Standard Catalog for High School Libraries and The Children's Catalog. They are publications of the American Library Association, and are primary guides in the selection of books. Annotations representing careful evaluations are given of almost all books.

The writer has checked these catalogs to determine whether the Newbery books have been approved. Twenty-one of them have been doubly recommended for first purchase. The latest Newbery Medal Book, 1947, was omitted because of its recency.

Lists of books may be relied upon when they are prepared by the library profession and specialists in the field of children's literature. No list will prove to be satisfactory until it has been compared with many lists

with a view of determining titles most often recommended. The source of the list is of first importance in determining its value.

The writer checked further to determine the comparative evaluation of the Newbery Medal books. This check was carried out by the use of lists compiled by those who have made thorough studies in the field. Chief among these were lists compiled by Nora E. Buest,<sup>1</sup> Ann Carol Moore,<sup>2</sup> and the National Council of Teachers of English.<sup>3</sup> Many of these specialists have written books for children; others are leaders among educators of wide experience, and some are editors of leading children's magazines.

Anne Carroll Moore, reviewer of children's books, has the following to say in her book The Three Owls, Third Book, a contemporary criticism of children's books:

New to writing for children, nothing is more difficult than writing about children's books. One must view the books in their changing relation to the general stream. One must keep in living touch with childhood by natural ways of communication. There is no short cut to first-hand knowledge of books of any kind and children's books are no exception. To the extent that one shares the reading

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Nora E. Buest, Five Hundred Books for Children, Washington, U. S. Office of Education, II (1939).

2

Anne Carroll Moore, "Views and Reviews of Children's Books," My Roads to Childhood (1939).

3

Committee on Recreational Reading, National Council of Teachers of English, Leisure Reading for Grades Seven, Eight, and Nine (1946).

interests of children one revises and enlarges his own impressions of the relative value of books at different stages of experience.

Children have fresher and more varied interests than their elders. They have greater independence of taste and more ready acceptance of what is new and strange and delightful from their point of view. It is the search for originality, for beauty, and truth to life that gives to the reviewing of children's books its compensating thrill of adventure and romance. For next to pure joy of creating a thing one's self is the discovery of something created by another. The instant recognition and detachment of a piece of original work from a mass of ready-made writing and the presentation of one's findings and convictions constitute the reviewer's main chance. His function is to declare the book's quality and give it a place in association with other books. To the degree that the review stimulates the desire of the reader to read the book to confirm or to differ with the critic will it be contributory to thought, discussion, criticism, fresh creative work. And this, as I see it, is the true objective for the reviewer of children's books no less than for the reviewer in the general field.<sup>4</sup>

Anne Carroll Moore is in many ways the best known personality in the field of children's literature in America. To young readers she is known as the author of the 'Nicholas' books. Among adults she is recognized for her leadership in children's library work and as an authority on young people's reading. Her Roads to Childhood and Three Owls books are considered among foremost critical sources on contemporary literature for children.<sup>5</sup>

Another criterion which the writer used in evaluating the Newbery books was the opinions of three recognized authorities on children's literature, secured through interviews with each. Those who were interviewed were

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<sup>4</sup> Anne Carroll Moore, The Three Owls, Third Book, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycroft, Editors, Junior Book of Authors, p. 266.

unanimous in their praise of the Newbery books as worthy contributions to children's literature. Elsewhere in this study or investigation, the specific comments which each has made are listed. To summarize:

Miss Siddie Joe Johnson, public librarian in the children's department of the Dallas, Texas, public library says, "As a whole, I think the Newbery books are wisely chosen, and are, most definitely, a contribution to children's literature."

Miss Nell McCorkle, Director of Instruction in the Dallas Elementary Schools, expresses her opinion in these words, "The Newbery Medal books, in my opinion, make a definite contribution to growth in reading, and to the development of desirable literary values in elementary and junior high schools."

Miss Ruth Spencer, librarian in the Winnetka School, Dallas, Texas, states her views in this concise statement, "The Newbery Medal books do most definitely make a worthwhile contribution in the field of literature for boys and girls."

#### Children's Evaluation of the Newbery Medal Books

An effort has been made by the writer to find out if children accept the Newbery Medal books as a part of their literature.

Several studies of the Newbery books have been made

and published. Since they help to solve the problem, a brief summary will be given.

Mary E. Townes, a graduate of Emory University Library School, carried out under the direction of the school this project. When the Newbery books were thirteen in number, a study was made of their popularity. Her conclusions were based upon the results obtained from questionnaires returned by twenty-six librarians and sixty-two children. Librarians from San Francisco to Atlanta, from Boston to Birmingham, almost unanimously said that the majority of the Newbery books were not popular. On the other hand, the children who were questioned about the Newbery books they had read, with one exception, liked the books. Most of the librarians agreed that the Newbery books were not so popular as a standard group of children's books. The majority of the children liked the Newbery books as well or better than the standard ones which they read, but not so well as the favorites of their own choice.

When the books were arranged according to popularity or designated by the librarians, the lists were scored and averaged as follows:

Most popular: Voyages of Doctor Dolittle  
Smoky, the Cowhorse

Average (in descending order):  
Invincible Louisa  
Hitty, Her First Hundred Years  
Dark Frigate

Below average (in descending order):

Trumpeter of Krakow  
Gay Neck  
Waterless Mountains  
The Cat Who Went to Heaven  
Tales from Silver Lands  
Shen of the Sea

Least popular: The Story of Mankind

Thirteen books were popular with the masses, but Mary E. Townes found that the Newbery books had a particular appeal to some children, that the books were taken and liked when introduced by parent, teacher, or librarian.<sup>6</sup>

A thorough study was completed in 1942 by Arta F. Lawrence, assistant professor of education, Eastern Oregon College of Education. This study which involved one thousand grade records covering a period of seven years, 1935-1942, was made to find out what use children had actually made of the Newbery Medal books.

The children were unselected; they had access to a standard library of six thousand volumes which included four copies of each of the Newbery books, and access to the public library of eight thousand volumes. The results of the investigation showed that books most widely read were Caddie Woodlawn, Voyages of Doctor Dolittle and Smoky, the Cowhorse, in the order named.

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<sup>6</sup>  
 Mary E. Townes, "The Popularity of the Newbery Medal Books," Library Journal, XL (January-December, 1935), 839.



As to grade placement, the fifth grade read the greatest number of Newbery books; those in the fourth grade were next, and those in the sixth grade came next and the seventh grade was last.

The following statement was made: "Children do choose the Newbery books and rank them among their general favorites, especially during the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades."<sup>7</sup>

The prediction is that the Voyages of Doctor Dolittle, Caddie Woodlawn, and Smoky, the Cowhorse are well on the way to becoming children's favorites.

Rose Zeligs, Avondale School, Cincinnati, Ohio, made a study of the Newbery books after eighteen had been selected. Her study was limited to the reaction of one hundred and fifty sixth grade children from one school and these children were far above the average in reading ability. Their social and economic background was very good.

She found that only a small number of children were reading the books and that still a smaller number liked them. However, some were praised highly.

The best liked book was the Voyages of Doctor Dolittle, which was read by forty-eight children. Smoky, the Cowhorse and Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze were read by sixteen children and Caddie Woodlawn was read by fourteen children, most of whom were girls. Four of the books

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<sup>7</sup> Artie F. Lawrence, "Facts about the Newbery Books," Library Journal, LXVII (January-December, 1942), 942.

had not been read at all, while the others had been read by a few of the children.

This report was limited to the reaction of sixth grade children from one school. Their average chronological age is eleven years and nine months, and their average mental age is fourteen years and nine months.<sup>8</sup>

An investigation of one hundred and thirty-five children was made by the writer in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades of the Stephen J. Hay School, Dallas, Texas, as a means of finding out their reading interests on the Newbery Medal books.

The children had daily access to the library, and the books were checked out for leisure reading. The library possessed a complete set of the Newbery Medal books. Questionnaires were given to the children to be checked.

The following questions were to be considered in this investigation:

1. At what grade level were the books read?
2. Which were the favorite books for boys and for girls?
3. What was the total number of books read in each grade?

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Rose Zeligs, "Children's Opinions of Newbery Prize Books," Elementary English Review, XVII (October, 1940), 218.

The results tabulated give a fair estimate:

Grade level - six

Boys:

First choice Smoky, the Cowhorse

Second choice Rabbit Hill

Girls:

First choice Rabbit Hill

Second choice (a tie) Smoky, the Cowhorse

Caddie Woodlawn

The total number of books read in grade six was 211.

Grade level - seven

Boys:

First choice Call It Courage

Second Choice The Story of Mankind

Girls:

First choice Smoky, the Cowhorse

Second choice Rabbit Hill

The total number of books read in grade seven was 190.

Grade level - eight

Boys

First choice Smoky, the Cowhorse

Second choice Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze

Girls:

First choice Caddie Woodlawn

Second choice Strawberry Girl

The total number of books read in grade eight was 270.

The results show that at the seventh grade level the children's range of interest was widened. In grade eight there was an increase in number of books read. It is noted that in each grade the boys chose only books for boys, while girls chose both books for girls and books for boys. The favorite of both boys and girls was Smoky, the Cowhorse.

Table 1, prepared by Siddie Jo Johnson, Nelle McCorkle, and Ruth Spencer, gives a summary of the final evaluation of the Newbery Medal books. The three adjectives: excellent, good and fair, are used to describe the authority, content, interests, style, authenticity, and format of the books.

The conclusions reached by these critics were:

1. The authorities are outstanding in their fields.
2. The content and interests are properly balanced and lend experiences to childhood.
3. The style is readable.
4. The materials are authentic. They are familiar with the time, the place and the people.
5. The formats are outstanding.



TABLE 1--Continued

Books	Author-ity			Content and Interest			Style			Authen-ticity			Format		
	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F
Trumpeter of Krakow	.				.			.		.					.
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Hitty, Her First Hundred Years	.				.			.		.	.		.		.
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The Cat Who Went to Heaven	.	.				.			.	.	.		.	.	.
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Waterless Mountain	.				.			.		.	.		.	.	.
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Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze	.			.				.		.	.		.		.
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Invincible Louisa	.				.				.	.	.		.		.
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Caddie Woodlawn	.			.				.		.	.		.		.
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TABLE 1--Continued

Books	Author-ity			Content and Interest			Style			Authen-#icity			Format		
	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F
Roller Skates		.				.			.		.			.	
The White Stag	.				.			.			.		.		
Thimble Summer		.		.		.		.			.		.	.	
Daniel Boone	.			.	.		.	.			.		.		
Call It Courage	.						.	.		.	.		.	.	.
The Match-lock Gun	.	.		.	.			.			.		.	.	
Adam of The Road		.		.	.			.	.		.		.	.	.
Johnny Tremain		.		.	.			.	.		.		.	.	.

TABLE 1--Continued

Books	Author-ity			Content and Interest			Style			Authen-ticity			Format		
	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F	E	G	F
Rabbit Hill		.		.			.			.			.		
Strawberry Girl		.		.			.			.			.		
Miss Hickory		.		.			.			.			.		

## Legend:

E - Excellent

G - Good

F - Fair



## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was concerned with the impartial evaluation of the Newbery Medal books. The John Newbery Medal was established and endowed by Frederic G. Melcher, editor of the Publishers' Weekly. It is awarded annually by the Children's Librarians Section of the American Library Association for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published during the preceding year. The Medal is named after John Newbery, an eighteenth century bookseller who was the first publisher to issue books especially for children. To date, twenty-seven books have been chosen as Newbery Medal winners.

In this study the writer has given brief reviews of all the winning books, and has given biographical sketches of their authors and illustrators.

This study was made by the writer to determine whether the Newbery Medal books make a definite contribution to children's literature, and if the quality of the books is such that they are worthy of a place in the field of children's literature.

The study was conducted through the reading of all

available authoritative sources of information, by experimental reading tests performed by the writer and others, and through interviews with three well-known educators who have been in positions to observe the values of the Newbery books throughout the years.

### Conclusions

1. The findings of this study have shown that the authors of the Newbery Medal books are men and women of high ideals and outstanding abilities.

2. Eminent artists have contributed their abilities in making the books beautiful and distinguished.

3. The combined efforts of authors and artists have made it possible for children to enjoy both forms of art.

4. The books provide desirable traits for the development of good character, and the practice of good citizenship.

5. The style of these stories is appropriate to the theme.

6. Results of tests show that children choose these books and rank them among their general favorites.

7. Librarians suggest that children should be guided in the reading of these books because they are highly specialized.

8. The Newbery Medal books give a variety of experiences in reading. They appeal to the reading interests

of children, even though some of them are highly technical.

9. In some instances, authorities have been prone to criticize the selection of the books, because it is done by adults, but the majority of the authorities seem to agree that, even though children's interests should always be a paramount consideration, interests alone should not determine the selection of their books.

10. The literary quality of these books is such that all are found on the approved list used by children's libraries.

11. Their range of appeal extends from the level of the intermediate grades through high school.

12. All have had favorable press reviews by qualified literary critics.

13. The format of these books is exceptionally outstanding. They are elaborate and readable.

#### Recommendations

In the light of the preceding conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. That competent adults help the children sample these books.
2. That all libraries should include them in their lists.
3. That since they are so attractive in structure they should be displayed and be accessible to children.

4. That more of these books should be chosen for children of the intermediate grade levels.
5. That children should be encouraged to read them for the development of desirable literary values as well as for their interest in them.
6. That they should be read for their democratic and character-building influences.
7. That they should be read by children because of their content, structural perfection and finished style as well as for their profound influence for wholesome living.

## APPENDIX

Table 2 is an individual evaluation of the Newbery Medal books by Siddie Jo Johnson, Nelle McCorkle and Ruth Spencer. The same procedure for evaluation has been followed as in Table 1. The opinions of the three critics indicate that the qualities of these books have met the literary standards set up in the criteria of this thesis.

TABLE 2

## EVALUATION OF NEWBERY MEDAL BOOKS

Critics	Authority	Content and Interests	Style	Authen- ticity	Format
<b>The Story of Mankind</b>					
Johnson	E	G	G	E	G
McCorkle	E	F	G	E	G
Spencer	E	G	G	E	G
<b>The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle</b>					
Johnson	E	E	E	G	E
McCorkle	E	E	E	G	E
Spencer	E	E	E	G	E
<b>The Dark Frigate</b>					
Johnson	G	G	F	G	F
McCorkle	E	G	G	E	E
Spencer	E	G	F	G	F
<b>Tales from Silver Lands</b>					
Johnson	E	G	G	G	E
McCorkle	E	F	F	E	E
Spencer	E	F	F	G	E
<b>Shen of the Sea</b>					
Johnson	G	F	F	G	E
McCorkle	E	F	F	G	E
Spencer	E	F	F	G	E
<b>Smoky, the Cowhorse</b>					
Johnson	E	E	E	G	F
McCorkle	E	E	E	G	F
Spencer	E	E	G	G	F
<b>Gay Neck</b>					
Johnson	E	E	E	E	E
McCorkle	E	F	G	E	E
Spencer	E	F	G	E	E

TABLE 2 - continued

Critics	Authority	Content and Interests	Style	Authen- ticity	Format
<b>Trumpeter of Krakow</b>					
Johnson	E	G	G	E	F
McCorkle	E	G	G	E	F
Spencer	E	F	F	E	F
<b>Hitty, Her First Hundred Years</b>					
Johnson	E	G	G	G	E
McCorkle	E	F	G	G	E
Spencer	E	G	G	G	E
<b>The Cat Who Went to Heaven</b>					
Johnson	E	F	F	G	E
McCorkle	G	F	F	G	E
Spencer	G	F	F	G	G
<b>Waterless Mountain</b>					
Johnson	E	G	G	G	G
McCorkle	E	F	G	G	G
Spencer	E	G	G	G	G
<b>Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze</b>					
Johnson	E	E	E	G	F
McCorkle	E	E	E	G	F
Spencer	E	E	E	G	F
<b>Invincible Louisa</b>					
Johnson	E	F	F	G	F
McCorkle	E	F	F	G	F
Spencer	E	G	F	G	F
<b>Dobry</b>					
Johnson	G	F	F	G	E
McCorkle	G	G	G	G	G
Spencer	G	F	F	G	G

TABLE 2 - continued

Critics	Authority	Content and Interests	Style	Authen- ticity	Format
<b>Caddie Woodlawn</b>					
Johnson	E	E	E	G	F
McCorkle	E	E	E	G	F
Spencer	E	E	E	G	F
<b>Roller Skates</b>					
Johnson	G	F	G	G	G
McCorkle	G	F	F	G	G
Spencer	G	F	F	G	G
<b>The White Stag</b>					
Johnson	E	G	G	G	E
McCorkle	E	G	G	G	E
Spencer	E	G	G	G	E
<b>Thimble Summer</b>					
Johnson	G	G	G	G	G
McCorkle	G	F	G	G	G
Spencer	G	F	G	G	F
<b>Daniel Boone</b>					
Johnson	E	E	E	G	E
McCorkle	E	G	G	G	E
Spencer	E	E	E	G	E
<b>Call It Courage</b>					
Johnson	E	E	E	E	G
McCorkle	E	E	E	E	G
Spencer	E	E	E	E	F
<b>The Matchlock Gun</b>					
Johnson	G	E	G	G	G
McCorkle	G	G	G	G	G
Spencer	E	G	G	G	G



TABLE 2 - continued

Critics	Authority	Content and Interests	Style	Authen- ticity	Format
<b>Adam of the Road</b>					
Johnson	G	G	G	G	F
McCorkle	G	F	F	G	F
Spencer	G	G	F	G	F
<b>Johnny Tremain</b>					
Johnson	G	G	G	G	F
McCorkle	G	F	F	G	F
Spencer	G	G	F	G	F
<b>Rabbit Hill</b>					
Johnson	G	E	E	G	E
McCorkle	G	E	E	G	E
Spencer	G	E	E	G	E
<b>Strawberry Girl</b>					
Johnson	G	E	E	G	E
McCorkle	G	E	E	G	E
Spencer	G	E	E	G	E
<b>Miss Hickory</b>					
Johnson	G	E	E	G	E
McCorkle	G	G	E	G	E
Spencer	G	E	E	G	E

Legend - E - Excellent  
 G - Good  
 F - Fair

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