

FAMILY MEDIA/BOOKS

Newbery and Caldecott Medal-Winning Books for Kids

New and exciting books for kids of all ages

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Literary awards have never generated the same kind of mainstream attention as the

Oscars or the Grammys. But this year, local readers are getting excited about the children's book equivalent of an Oscar – the John Newbery Medal – because [the winning author \(https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/books/issaquahs-donna-barba-higuera-is-living-an-authors-dream-as-winner-of-2022-newbery-medal-for-childrens-literature/\)](https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/books/issaquahs-donna-barba-higuera-is-living-an-authors-dream-as-winner-of-2022-newbery-medal-for-childrens-literature/) is a practicing optometrist from Issaquah. Donna Barba Higuera won the Newbery for her third book, “The Last Cuentista,” which draws on Mexican folklore to explore the role of storytelling in survival. Set in outer space, the science fiction plot keeps young readers on the edge of their seats even as they are encouraged to think about deep questions.

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The Newbery books

The oldest children’s book award in the world, the Newbery has been bestowed on one book as the “most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” each year for a century. The chances are good that many of your own favorite children’s books are Newbery winners, too. Past winners include classics such as Katherine Paterson’s [“Bridge to Terabithia \(https://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Terabithia-Katherine-Paterson/dp/0690013590/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\),”](https://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Terabithia-Katherine-Paterson/dp/0690013590/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) E.B. White’s [“Charlotte’s Web \(https://www.amazon.com/Charlottes-Web-B-White/dp/0061124958/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)”](https://www.amazon.com/Charlottes-Web-B-White/dp/0061124958/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) and Mildred Taylor’s [“Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry \(https://www.amazon.com/Roll-Thunder-Hear-Cry-Anniversary/dp/110199388X/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\),”](https://www.amazon.com/Roll-Thunder-Hear-Cry-Anniversary/dp/110199388X/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) as well as newer but equally beloved stories like Kate DiCamillo’s [“Flora & Ulysses \(https://www.amazon.com/Flora-Ulysses-Illuminated-Kate-DiCamillo/dp/076366040X/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\).”](https://www.amazon.com/Flora-Ulysses-Illuminated-Kate-DiCamillo/dp/076366040X/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)

[“The Last Cuentista \(https://www.amazon.com/Last-Cuentista-Donna-Barba-Higuera/dp/1646140893/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)”](https://www.amazon.com/Last-Cuentista-Donna-Barba-Higuera/dp/1646140893/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) is the Newbery Medal winner this round, but each year, the Newbery recognizes a handful of “Honor Books” in addition to the winner, and these runners-up are pretty good, too.

Check out this year's honorees.

["Red, White, and Whole \(https://www.amazon.com/Red-White-Whole-Rajani-LaRocca/dp/006304742X/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)"](https://www.amazon.com/Red-White-Whole-Rajani-LaRocca/dp/006304742X/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) by Rajani LaRocca

In this book written in verse, Reha struggles to fit in as the only Indian-American kid in her middle school, and she struggles to meet her parents' strict standards at home. But when her mother becomes dangerously ill, Reha finds strength and courage she didn't know she had. Recommended for ages 8–12.

["A Snake Falls to Earth \(https://www.amazon.com/Snake-Falls-Darcie-Little-Badger/dp/1646140923/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)"](https://www.amazon.com/Snake-Falls-Darcie-Little-Badger/dp/1646140923/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) by Darcie Little Badger

Drawing on traditional Lipan Apache storytelling structure, this own-voices story introduces readers to a culture rarely seen in modern literature. This book about a contemporary Apache girl living in Texas blends traditional stories and internet stardom in a magical realist mélange of monsters, magic and family. Recommended for ages 12–18.

["Too Bright to See \(https://www.amazon.com/Too-Bright-See-Kyle-Lukoff/dp/0593111176/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)"](https://www.amazon.com/Too-Bright-See-Kyle-Lukoff/dp/0593111176/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) by Kyle Lukoff

In a year with unprecedented challenges pitted against books with LGBTQ+ content, Lukoff's "Too Bright to See" is especially important. Tweens will enjoy it for the story that deals with topics important to sixth graders: middle school, ghosts and figuring out one's gender identity. Recommended for ages 10–12.

["Watercress \(https://www.amazon.com/Watercress-Andrea-Wang/dp/0823446247/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)"](https://www.amazon.com/Watercress-Andrea-Wang/dp/0823446247/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) by Andrea Wang

In "Watercress," a young girl connects with her Chinese heritage during a road trip in Ohio. She is embarrassed when her parents stop to forage watercress at the side of the road. She overcomes her embarrassment when her mother shares a story about her own life in China. Recommended for ages 4–8.

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The Caldecott books

“[Watercress \(https://www.amazon.com/Watercress-Andrea-Wang/dp/0823446247/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)](https://www.amazon.com/Watercress-Andrea-Wang/dp/0823446247/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” received a Newbery Honor and is also this year’s Caldecott Medal winner. The Caldecott awards the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children each year. This year’s winner, “Watercress,” honors illustrator Jason Chin, who developed a unique artistic style inspired by Chinese painting techniques.

“[Have You Ever Seen a Flower? \(https://www.amazon.com/Have-You-Ever-Seen-Flower/dp/1452182701/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)](https://www.amazon.com/Have-You-Ever-Seen-Flower/dp/1452182701/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Shawn Harris

This is the first book that illustrator Shawn Harris has written himself. In it, a child experiences a flower using all five senses, expanding their perspective and connecting more deeply with nature. Recommended for ages 3–5.

“[Mel Fell \(https://www.amazon.com/Mel-Fell-Corey-R-Tabor/dp/0062878018/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)](https://www.amazon.com/Mel-Fell-Corey-R-Tabor/dp/0062878018/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Corey R. Tabor

“Mel Fell” playfully encourages readers to interact with the physical book as the text and illustrations follow a plucky little bird down, around and up the page. Recommended for ages 4–8.

“[Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre \(https://www.amazon.com/Unspeakable-Massacre-Carole-Boston-Weatherford/dp/1541581202/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)](https://www.amazon.com/Unspeakable-Massacre-Carole-Boston-Weatherford/dp/1541581202/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Floyd Cooper

With age-appropriate vocabulary and sepia-toned oil paintings, “Unspeakable” tells the story of the largest mass killing of Americans by Americans in history. It’s a story that I never learned about in school – by teaching our children the truth about America’s history of racism that the next generation will be better able to resist it. Recommended for ages 8–12.

"Wonder Walkers (https://www.amazon.com/Wonder-Walkers-Micha-Archer/dp/0593109643/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)" by Micha Archer

As two curious kids embark on a "wonder walk" to explore nature, they let their imaginations soar. Using unique ink and collage art illustrations, this book's visuals help kids make new connections and spark creative thinking. Recommended for ages 3–7.

Other book awards to know about:

Literary awards, like the publishing industry itself, have historically favored white male authors and books about middle-class white people. As the list above shows, the Newbery and Caldecott honorees have become more diverse with respect to the stories and artists they recognize, but if you are looking for more diverse reads, there are a couple of other book awards you should know about.

Sponsored by the American Library Association's Rainbow Round Table, the Stonewall Book Awards (<https://www.ala.org/rt/rrt/award/stonewall>) recognize quality stories that relate to the LGBTQ+ experience. Among this year's winners, you'll find the charming middle-grade graphic novel "Beetle & The Hollowbones (https://www.amazon.com/Beetle-Hollowbones-Aliza-Layne/dp/1534441530/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)," in which 12-year-old goblin witch named Beetle develops a crush on her best friend as they try to save a ghost trapped in the mall, as well as the YA title "You Should See Me in a Crown (https://www.amazon.com/You-Should-See-Me-Crown/dp/1338503294/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)," in which a misfit competes with her crush to become prom queen.

Named in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s widow, The Coretta Scott King Book Awards (<https://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards>) are bestowed annually to outstanding own voices of African American children's books. This year's author and illustrator winners also received a Caldecott for "Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre (https://www.amazon.com/Unspeakable-Massacre-Carole-Boston-Weatherford/dp/1541581202/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)." Like the

Newbery, The Coretta Scott King Award also has an honor list. Among this year's honorees are "[Home Is Not a Country \(https://www.amazon.com/Home-Not-Country-Safia-Elhillo/dp/0593177053/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)](https://www.amazon.com/Home-Not-Country-Safia-Elhillo/dp/0593177053/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)" by Safia Elhillo and "[Nina: A Story of Nina Simone \(https://www.amazon.com/Nina-Story-Simone-Traci-Todd/dp/1524737283/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)](https://www.amazon.com/Nina-Story-Simone-Traci-Todd/dp/1524737283/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)" by Traci N. Todd. "Home Is Not a Country" is a novel in verse in which the suburban daughter of immigrants imagines the girl she might have been under different circumstances. In Todd's "Nina," illustrator Christian Robinson's signature acrylic paint and collage art supports the written story of singer Nina Simone, who used her classical music background to become a powerful voice in the civil rights movement.

[Lists of current and past winners of The Coretta Scott King Book Awards \(https://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards/coretta-scott-king-book-awards-all-recipients-1970-present\)](https://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards/coretta-scott-king-book-awards-all-recipients-1970-present) and [Stonewall Book Awards \(https://www.ala.org/rt/rrt/award/stonewall/honored\)](https://www.ala.org/rt/rrt/award/stonewall/honored) are available on the respective websites.

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