



Rewarding Reads: celebrating the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals

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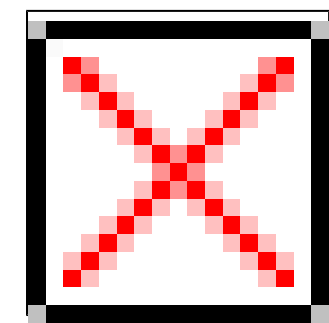
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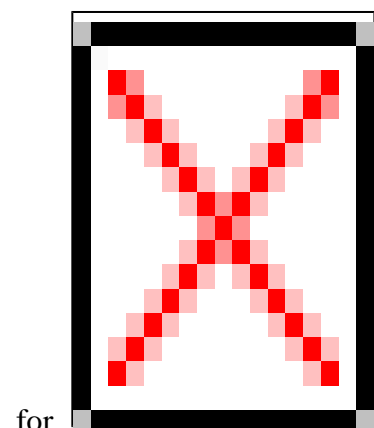
Jake Hope looks back over the celebrated children's book awards



Book awards for children act as a barometer for the shifting traditions, values and ideas that we as individuals and as a society invest in. Information Professional's Carnegie and Kate Greenaway medals are the longest running awards in the United Kingdom and among the most prestigious. Celebrating their 80th and 60th anniversaries respectively, the prizes recognise a rich reader experience built from the words or pictures of a work published for children. The wide-ranging base of subjects, genres, themes and styles among its past winners provides material for exploring perspectives on childhood and the formative role that stories and books have in forging our identity and, by extension, of shaping society.

Setting the Standard

Arthur Ransome was the inaugural winner of the **Carnegie Medal** (1936), awarded to a work of outstanding literature

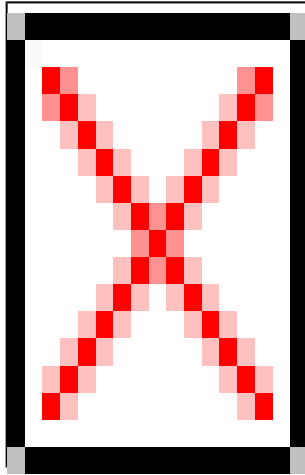


for children. **Pigeon Post** is a real romp of a children's adventure novel with a summer holiday search for treasure among a close-knit group of friends. Underlying the plot are ideas around communication and independence and playful consideration of the different worlds that children and adults sometimes inhabit. This innocent childhood world is replicated to some extent in Edward Ardizzone's **Tim All Alone**, the inaugural winner of the **Kate Greenaway Award**

for distinguished illustration. The eponymous Tim returns home to find his parents have disappeared, and so sets out on a nautical adventure to find them, his adventure vividly depicted through the draughtsmanship of Ardizzone's pen and ink sketches and water colour spreads.

Innocence Lost

Both books explore a construction of childhood where play and exploration form crucial parts of character experiences and ones where those themes embrace readers through vicarious involvement. Not all winners have shown childhood through such rosy eyes, however. Robert Westall's **The Scarecrows** was his second win (1981), after **The Machine Gunners** (1975). His work disrupted the notion of childhood as a time of innocence and uncovered a much darker side



to play and preoccupation. **The Scarecrows** itself is a stark account of frustrated needs, desires and the awakening of sexual desire. More recently Kevin Brooks' **The Bunker Diary** (2014), looked at ideas of control and powerlessness and caused debate around just what constitutes a children's book and whether hope is a key element in this.

Judging Juries

It is the professional expertise of librarians that forms the base of decisions made by the panel of judges. Each judge is a librarian representing each regional branch of the **Youth Libraries Group**. It is their critical discernment, based around the breadth of their reading and encompassing knowledge of trends in publishing and prevalent attitudes surrounding childhood, that has fuelled their decisions over the decades. The awards have sometimes been criticised for not involving the target audience of children in the actual judging itself.

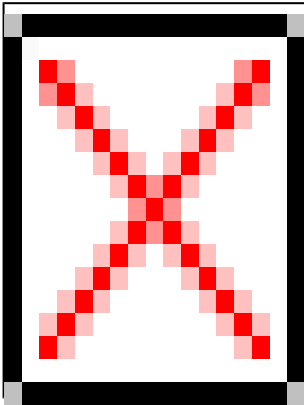
Casting Long Shadows

Although not involved in judging, children and young people across the United Kingdom and further afield do take part in shadowing. Established in the early 1990s the Shadowing Scheme sees groups involved in reading and appraising the shortlists of the medals. More groups currently shadow the **Carnegie Medal** than the **Kate Greenaway Medal**, although a project funded by the **Siobhan Dowd Trust** is this year exploring the efficacy of using illustrated books from the **Kate Greenaway Medal** as a means to promote reading and confidence among harder to reach groups. A powerful element of shadowing is the way it doesn't regard literature as a standalone subject, but explores its inter-connections and relevance to all areas of life and learning - arts, communication, sciences, philosophy and psychology, it weaves individual subject strands into a dense tapestry. **Amnesty International** - who have partnered with the awards to give Honours to books that promote Human Rights issues - explore ethical considerations and there are ample craft and arts based materials in the support material available to shadowing groups. In the anniversary year, shadowing groups are

also able to select one of the past winners to adopt and read, choosing from a myriad of authors and subjects.

Wide-ranging Winners

Critics of the award have sometimes suggested that the same types of books win though this can be dispelled by the



variety of winners. The awards have been won by information books like Edward Osmond's Carnegie winner, **A Valley Grows Up** (1953), which charts the development of a valley and its growth into a flourishing settlement through the ages, or Pauline Baynes's Kate Greenaway winner, **A Dictionary of Chivalry** (1968). Poetry has won both awards with Sarah Crossan's verse novel, **One** (2016), being the most recent Carnegie winner and Charles Keeping's illustrations to Alfred Noye's poems **The Highwayman** (1981) awarded the Greenaway. Biography has fared well with Eleanor Doorly's **Radium Woman** winning the Carnegie (1939) for its account of Marie Curie's life, and Michael Foreman's **War Boy: A Country Childhood** (1989), winning the Kate Greenaway for its highly evocative recreation of war time Britain.

Firm Favourites

During the 70th and 50th anniversaries of the awards in 2007, a poll was held to find the **Carnegie of Carnegies** and **Greenaway of Greenaways**. These were won by Philip Pullman with **Northern Lights** (1995 Carnegie winner), the first instalment of the seminal **His Dark Materials** trilogy and by Shirley Hughes with **Dogger** (1977 Kate Greenaway winner), a story about losing a much loved toy. Author Patrick Ness and illustrator Jim Kay hold the unique honour of being the first and only pairing to win both the **Carnegie** and the **Kate Greenaway** medal with the same book. That was **A Monster Calls** (2012), which was based around an idea by Siobhan Dowd, winner of the **Carnegie Medal** herself with **Bog Child** (2009), an exploration of the history and divisions of Ireland.

With around 15,000 books published annually the **Carnegie** and **Kate Greenaway Medals**, their longlists, shortlists and eventual winners provide an excellent means for navigating through what can sometimes feel an overwhelming array of new publications. The list of winners offer stunning vantage over development of the field that spans decades. Why not delve into their riches yourself?

Anniversary Activities

Don't miss out on a range of special activity taking place in this celebratory year. Why not mine the rich treasures trove of the two awards by exploring [the living archive](#) [3].

CILIP have commissioned a number of [thought pieces](#) [4] by key people in the children's book world, these offer a fascinating and thematic place to learn more about the awards and their history.

A special [anniversary blog](#) [5] is being created to explore every past Carnegie winner, shadowing groups are also able to adopt past winners.

Twice winner of the Carnegie Medal Anne Fine is celebrating the awards with a monthly breakdown of past winners by decade over on her [Children's Laureate site](#) [6].

The #YATakeover are planning a special themed anniversary Twitter discussion leading up to this year's announcement, check out the hashtag to find out more information as the exciting programme is announced.

This year's winners will be announced on 19 June, keep an eye out on the [official website](#) [7] to watch the live screening and to organise your own anniversary party using the exciting resources and support materials.

Jake Hope is a Reading Development and Children's Book Consultant. He has worked as the Reading and Learning Development Manager for Lancashire Libraries. Jake is an active member of the Youth Libraries Group both on the North West and National Committees. He is currently reading all of the past Carnegie winners and blogging about these.

Books mentioned

Pigeon Post, Arthur Ransome, Vintage Classics, 978-0099582540 £7.99

[Tim All Alone](#) [8], Edward Ardizzone, Frances Lincoln, 978-1-8478-0628-4, £12.99 hbk

[The Scarecrows](#) [9], Robert Westall, Macmillan Children's Books, 978-1-9095-3160-4, £7.99 pbk

[The Bunker Diary](#) [10], Kevin Brooks, Penguin, 978-0141326122, £7.99 pbk

[One](#), [11] Sarah Crossan, Bloomsbury, 978-1-4088-2721-5, £7.99

The Highwayman, Alfred Noyes illus Charles Keeping, Oxford, 978-0-1927-9442-0, £7.99

Radium Woman, Eleanor Doorly, O/P

War Boy: A Country Childhood, Michael Foreman, Pavilion Children's Books, 978-1-8436-5087-4, £9.99

[Northern Lights](#) [12], Philip Pullman, Scholastic, 978-1-4071-3022-4, £7.99pbk

Dogger, Shirley Hughes, Red Fox, 978-1-8623-0805-3, **£6.99 pbk**

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[4] <http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/thought-pieces.php>

- [5] <http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/anniversary-blog.php>
- [6] <http://www.myhomelibrary.org>
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