

Shannon Nierman

TE 836

6/9/19

Caldecott Winners

The Caldecott award is given to illustrators for their high quality creations in children's picture books. This award recognizes illustrators for their hard work, just as authors are recognized for the Newbery awards. The books I've chosen to analyze are as follows: *The Biggest Bear* by: Lynd Ward, *Where the Wild Things Are* by: Maurice Sendak, *Jumanji* by: Chris Van Allsburg, *So You Want to Be President?* Written by: Judith St. George and illustrated by: David Small, *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* written by: Philip C. Stead and illustrated by: Erin E. Stead, and finally, *Hello Lighthouse* by: Sophie Blackall. These illustrators distinctively won due to their unique artistic ability, each book vastly different and changed from year to year. Since the Caldecott was started in 1938 – readers have seen drastic changes in illustrations throughout time.

The first book I explored was *The Biggest Bear* written and illustrated by: Lynd Ward created in 1952, winning the award in 1953. This picture book uniquely separates the words/writing from the pictures. The left page is completely white with black letters for the writing, whereas, the right page is solely left for a brown and white illustration. The amount of space given allows the illustrator to use as much of it to capture the idea, without the words taking away from the picture. It allows focus to first be on the words and then on the pictures, independent from anything else. The book begins with a picture of a young boy holding a gun; depicting something that might have been acceptable in the 1950s when it was published, but might spark up some uproar now-a-days. Even though the book was using the gun to show that the young boy was a hunter; with present day concerns of gun violence, many might be against

the idea of showing or illustrating it at all in a children's book. In each of the pictures throughout the book, the bear itself is the focal point at most points in the story; representing its importance as well as darkening the bear with the illustrators shading more so than any other part of the picture. The illustrators seemed to show the time that the book was made, with simplistic wooden barns and characters wearing overalls for the kids on the farm and women wearing long olden day dresses to work and at in cleaning and cooking.

The second book I analyzed was *Where the Wild Things Are* written and illustrated by: Maurice Sendak. This book was published in 1963, winning the award in 1964. This book presents a lot of different elements to the illustrations. As readers and observers we notice how the book starts off with separating the words and pictures on different pages, similar to *The Biggest Bear*. Although, as the story progresses and the adventure begins, we start to see the amount of white on the page lessen. For example, when everything was calm in the story there was writing on one page and an illustration on the other. When the action of the story was at its greatest, the illustrator used the bleeding method, having no white space; and using the whole two pages to display what was going on in the story. In addition, Sendak uses the cut-out technique to make and illustrate the pictures as though they are cut out and glued onto the page with no frame. She also provides the home-away-from-home element as Max's setting starts at home, has an adventure with the wild creatures, and returns back home. This story also shows some questionable pictures, as some children might consider these illustrations too frightening for a younger age group. It reinforces the idea that we were more lenient back in time on what images we chose to illustrate for children in books. From this book to the previous book, I also noticed a drastic change in color. This book not only had multiple colors, but several techniques and designs to making each character/creature uniquely different; whereas, the last book only

used brown and white. Finally, it took a big jump from the adventures of both books; from realistic creatures, such as bears in the first book to imaginary creatures in this book.

The third book I looked into was *Jumanji* written and illustrated by: Chris Van Allsburg. This book was published in 1981, winning the award in 1982. This book shows complexity in its pictures at many diverse levels. Van Allsburg allows the observers to notice the illustrations following the story from many points of view; positioning the viewer somewhere to specifically notice parts in the picture. This book similarly represents some unsettling and suspenseful illustrations throughout the book that might scare younger children with its realistic illustrations of the wild, dangerous, animals. Even though its pictures are life-like, Van Allsburg also puts white border frames around each picture making it look like if you took it out of the book, it could be a picture that was taken and framed in black and white.

The fourth book I examined was *So You Want to Be President?* Written by: Judith St. George and illustrated by: David Small. This book was published in 2000, winning the award in 2001. This book and its illustrations took a bold turn in time for when it was produced. It shows many artistic elements that we see as part of the 2000s. Not only is this book bursting with vibrant colors, it also has a more modern, cartoonist-type work. The book takes a serious historic topic and turns it into a whimsical animated illustrated children's book at the start of a new century in time. Nearly all of Small's illustrations are a double page spread, allowing enough space for him to accurately portray the image he is trying to get across so that the entire setting of each scene in the book can be noticed. Small also uses artistic styles of his own to make all of illustrations look like they were painted on the pages.

The fifth book I delved into was *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* written by: Philip C. Stead and illustrated by: Erin E. Stead. This book was published in 2010, winning the award in 2011.

This book branches upon the whimsical element that the previous book did, in its own unique way. The illustrations allow your imagination to flow, with simplistic pictures of characters interacting with others that would not happen in real life. For example, a man and an elephant playing chess are not something that we would see in an everyday setting, but something that stems from imagination. The pictures are highlighted on key points that the illustrator wants you to focus on. In addition, the book has more light-hearted material; unlike our earlier published books.

The sixth and finally book I studied was *Hello Lighthouse* written and illustrated by: Sophie Blackall. This book was published in 2018, winning the award in 2019. This last book tied many elements into one entire book. In the previous books, the illustrator chose one or two artistic elements; whereas, Sophie Blackall attempted at a plethora of different ongoing elements. To start, she prepared for the story by creating her book longer length wise to account for an accurate representation of the lighthouses throughout the book. As well she used many artistic textures to display the nature and outdoor elements of the book, while using bold colors. She also presented many framed illustrations that looked like picture frames of memories that you would keep. The progression of the book outlines a realistic problem, although, not in an intimidating way. None of the pictures were frightening visually.

Overall, the books throughout time created many different angles that an observer could take note of as they were reading these award winning books throughout time. We observed different thematic elements artistically; understanding the time of when the book was published – including what is acceptable or controversial in children books. We also noticed the spectrum of color or lack there-of. Finally, we paid close attention to the point of the view of the story and

the different textures and shadings when the illustrator wanted to bring a specific point of the book to our attention.

Reference Page:

The Biggest Bear, Lynd Ward, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952.

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak, Harper Collins, 1963.

Jumanji, Chris Van Allsburg, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981.

So You Want to Be President?, Judith St. George, Philomel Books, 2000.

A Sick Day for Amos McGee, Erin E. Stead, Roaring Book Press, 2010.

Hello Lighthouse, Sophie Blackall, Little, Brown and Company, 2018.