

Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction for Children

Charge: To select the recipient of the annual Charlotte Huck Award® and up to five honor books, and to promote the use of children’s fiction books in the classroom. The Charlotte Huck Award® was established in 2014 to promote and recognize excellence in the writing of fiction for children. In particular, the award recognizes fiction that has the potential for transforming children’s lives by inviting compassion, imagination, and wonder. The award is presented at the Children’s Book Awards Luncheon at the NCTE Annual Convention. For more information on the Charlotte Huck Award, please go to: <http://www2.ncte.org/awards/nctechildrens-book-awards/charlotte-huck-award/>.

Names, affiliations, and geographic region for members:

Name	Affiliation	Geographic Location
Cecilia M. Espinosa	Professor Lehman College/CUNY	New York City, NY
Grace Choi	Literacy Resource Teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools	Fairfax, VA
Suzanne Costner	School library media specialist, Fairview Elem.	Maryville, TN
Hiawatha Smith	Associate Professor UW-River Falls	Twin Cities WI/MN
María Leija	Assistant Professor The University of Texas at San Antonio	San Antonio, TX
Tiffany Rehbein	Principal Bain Elementary School Laramie County School District #1	Cheyenne, WY
JoAnne Powless	Teacher Onondaga Nation School	Onondaga Nation, NY

Name	Affiliation	Geographic Location
Donna Bulatowicz,	Montana State University Billings,	Mountain West
Dahlia Constantine	Teachers College, Columbia University	East
Irene Latham		Southeast
Holly Johnson	University of Cincinnati,	Midwest
María Leija,	University of Texas at San Antonio,	Southwest
Darius Phelps	Teachers College, Columbia University	East
JoAnne Powless	Onondaga Nation School	East

Actions, projects, initiatives, or studies in progress

From Past Huck Award Committee Chair, Donna Bulatowicz - NCTE Convention (2022 Committee)

The committee read and reviewed books to identify outstanding titles that meet the Charlotte Huck Award criteria. We met once a month via Zoom to discuss books that we located independently (via libraries, NetGalley, Edelweiss, bookstores, or other physical or online locations) and that publishers sent to us. We discussed books through email and a private chat between meetings.

On November 17th, we met in person for the deliberation meeting. Prior to our deliberation meeting, each person was assigned six books to review in depth. Each person re-read the books and reviewed and added to notes regarding the Huck criteria, looking at how the book did or did not meet specific criteria. In the deliberation meeting, each person led a discussion of the books they reviewed, using the criteria as a guide. We chose those that best met the criteria to be our winner, honor, and recommended books. We announced these books at the Children's Book Award Luncheon on November 19th. We also had a session at the conference on November 18th that highlighted the honor books from the previous year. We partnered with Orbis Pictus for this session. No Huck honor author or illustrator was able to attend, unfortunately. On November 19th, we had a session where we talked about serving on the book award committees and encouraged attendees to ask questions and to apply to serve on the committees.

Significant changes or trends in our field:

There is a trend in education to make conferences more accessible for all. NCTE has been a leader in this, providing online sessions in previous years. Accessibility also has to do with affordability, and NCTE has worked to keep the conference costs minimal and provided a scholarship for registration. NCTE can continue to work toward accessibility for the conference by changing a few things, such as having the book awards as a free presentation rather than a luncheon. The luncheon cost can make it difficult for people who are paying for the conference out of pocket. Additionally, the scents of the luncheon and the noise of so many people talking at once can be a challenge for those who have sensory differences, including some on the autism spectrum.

December 16, 2022-present (2023 Current Huck Award Committee Chair, Cecilia M. Espinosa)

The committee chair selected four new members to the Huck Award Committee. All of them were approved by NCTE. Sarah provided an Orientation to all members and Cecilia Espinosa and the assistants to the chair, Maria Lieja and Joanne Powless provided a specific one for the new members to the Huck Award. The committee chair met with NCTE Senior Coordinator, Sarah Miller. She also communicated regularly with Sarah Miller in order to ensure quality communication with NCTE. Emails were sent to publishers explaining the award criteria and the committee member contact list.

The committee has been reading and reviewing books received each month in light of the criteria. Members of the committee continue to locate books on their own (NetGalley, Edelweiss, bookstores, libraries, conferences, and other physical or online location) and books that publishers sent to each member. The committee meets once a month online (usually via Zoom) to discuss the books that we have read in light of the criteria. We also have a private chat on WhatsApp where we discuss books between meetings. We will meet the Thursday prior to the start of the convention to choose those books that best meet the criteria to be our winner, honor, and recommended books. We will announce these at the Children's Book Award Luncheon on November 18th. We also plan to present two sessions at the NCTE conference, one centered on informing the membership what the awards involve, as well as one session within the Build Your Stack initiative with a focus on diversity and the Huck Award. We also plan to be available at scheduled times for people to visit and discuss our committee's work and how to apply to participate in the committee.

Accomplishments and timeline for future work

In addition to what has been listed in the response to the previous question, the committee has organized a list of recommended books not yet received in order to send out requests to publishers to invite them to submit books for consideration for the award. When committee members locate a book the committee has not yet received, the committee member adds it to the list of recommended books to be sent for request to publishers. We share this list with Sarah Miller, Senior Coordinator at NCTE.

The committee members have read a wide variety of books throughout the year. Members read book reviews, talk with colleagues, and generally do as much as they can to find books that might meet the award criteria. Committee members search for different formats of books (picture, early reader, beginning chapter books, novels, graphic novels, etc.) and different genres. We have three groups that focus on specific genres: contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, and science fiction and fantasy. These groups look for books in these genres and all formats. Specific book requests are added to the list of recommended books. Our committee members also complete various forms that guide our monthly meetings, such as monthly keep/withdraw forms that are filled out based on whether a book meets the criteria and should remain under consideration or not. Starting in August, members also fill out individual top 20 forms, where each member lists the 20 books that he/she/they feel best meet the criteria. We use these forms to guide discussion during our meetings, in addition to talking about other books that we have located that might meet criteria. We continue to prepare for the selection of the books that best meet criteria for our award winner, honor, and recommended books.

The committee members feel strongly that we should not have to pay for the Awards Luncheon on Saturday of the NCTE Annual Conference. Rationale: The Huck Award Committee members work for 11 months reviewing hundreds of books, locating quality books, discussing them thoughtfully each month, and toward the end meeting more often. They also spend a whole day of the conference (Thursday) on deliberations. On Friday, they prepare and finalize the presentation of the award winners. At the Awards Luncheon, they help organize the room and they present the award. They eagerly participate in this work because of their deep commitment to the field of children's literature, NCTE, and its membership.

Contributions to the profession of teaching and/or the understanding of literacy in educational contexts:

An excerpt of NCTE's vision states, "NCTE and its members will apply the power of language and literacy to actively pursue justice and equity for all students and the educators who serve them.... NCTE has a rich history of deriving expertise and advocacy from its members' professional research, practice, and knowledge. Today we must more precisely align this expertise to advance access, power, agency affiliation, and impact for all learners." Our committee's work aligns with this vision. The Huck Award Committee this year is composed of a diverse group of members. Each member brings a unique perspective and a wealth of expertise in children's literature. Their experiences as educators is deeply informed by the power of language and literacy to inform and aid work that pursues social justice and equity for all. One criterion for the award is with regards to ensuring that the fiction we select "connects children to their own humanity and offers them a rich experience with the power to influence their lives. We consider literature that centers minoritized groups, tells stories that challenge biases and narratives of deficit. The committee also considers stories that defy the status quo and work toward social justice and equity while stretching "children's thinking, feelings, and imagination", and "inviting compassion, imagination."