

## AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH LITERATURE AWARD

### American Indian Library Association

The American Indian Youth Literature Award (AIYLA) was created as a way to identify and honor the very best writing and illustrations by and about American Indians. Books selected to receive the award will present American Indians in the fullness of their humanity in either past or present contexts. Nominations may be fiction or non-fiction. There may be up to three awards given every two years - ***Best Picture Book, Best Middle School Book, and Best Young Adult Book.***

#### GENERAL CRITERIA

- The book allows children and young adults to look, read, recognize, and respond to the text and illustrations in a positive manner.
- Text and illustrations are infused with (or reflect) values and worldview of American Indian cultures, such as significance of community, extended family structures, harmony between material and non-material aspects of life, and respect for all aspects of Mother Earth.
- American Indian religion and spirituality, if included, is shown in a natural, not contrived way.
- Gender is balanced and accurately portrayed.
- Text and illustrations depicting race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or class will be free of stereotypes.
- Authentic and balanced characters will exhibit the wide range of positive and negative human emotions, behaviors, reactions, and lifestyles.

- American Indian characters will demonstrate the ability to achieve success on their own terms and in the context of Native cultures or communities.
- American Indian characters are portrayed as successful problem solvers rather than dependent on non-Indian teachers, social workers, and other authority figures.
- References and consultants with expertise in American Indian cultures are cited.
- Text and illustrations should accurately reflect the traditions, symbols, clothing, housing, and lifestyles of the nation(s) presented in the book, appropriate for the time period of the story.
- Women should be accurately portrayed as essential, integral, and powerful members of their communities, and not as subservient drudges or marginalized beasts of burden, as often occurs in historical works.
- The roles of traditional elders are authentically presented.
- Heroes are recognized by Native standards.
- Books should show the continuity of cultures, with indigenous values, religions, and morals as an outgrowth of the past and connected to the present.
- Historical texts portray American Indian people as human beings and members of highly defined and complex societies.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR YOUNG ADULT FICTION MATERIALS (ages 13 -17)

- American Indian characters should not be portrayed as stereotypical heroic guardians and caretakers of the environment, nor as faultless or flawless and unrealistically heroic (the "noble savage").

- Books should avoid inaccurate and unrealistic “coming of age” scenarios.
- Books should present accurate portrayals of contemporary life among American Indian teens in various geographical settings: on or near reservations, villages, urban, and suburban areas.
- Challenges and obstacles faced by American Indian teens in the story's time period should be realistic.
- There should be a balanced presentation between American Indian and non-Indian authority figures.

#### CRITERIA FOR TEXT

- Retellings or interpretations of traditional literature (myths, legends, folktales) should specify tribal origin and include notes regarding the origin and source for the story.
- "Warrior," "brave," "chief," and similar terms should be used in proper context. Not all men were or are warriors, chiefs, or braves.
- Inappropriate, insulting, or stereotypical terms like “squaw,” “papoose,” “redskin,” “paleface,” and “savage” should be used only in context, and not as standard vocabulary to refer to women, children, or Indian people.
- Generalizations, such as “Indians lived in tipis,” should be absent.
- Authors should use specific terms for American Indian nations when referring to only one people, such as “Yaqui” or “Wampanoag,” rather than generic terms like “Indian.”
- Books should consistently demonstrate parallel usage of terminology, i.e. “Indians” and “whites” or “Native people” and “white people.”

- Stereotypical portrayals of American Indian people as “fierce,” “violent,” “stealthy,” “stoic,” etc., should not be used gratuitously or out of context.
- Historical texts should avoid providing a distorted view that newcomers brought “civilization” to Indian peoples and thus improved Indian ways of life.
- Authors should avoid terminology that demeans American Indian cultures or implies the superiority of European ways.
- Significant American Indian characters should have personal names.
- The book should contain notes that verify or otherwise support the accuracy of the tribal language when used.
- Dialogue should be realistic and free of romantic overtones such as “My Son,” or “Tonto-speak” such as “Me go help.”

#### CRITERIA FOR ILLUSTRATIONS

- Illustrations should be high quality, with careful attention given to accurate and authentic portrayals of culture as well as artistic elements of design.
- Illustrations should accurately portray the tribe(s)/nation(s) specified, and enhance the text.
- American Indian people are shown wearing traditional clothing in appropriate contexts.
- Artwork is not predominated by generic “Indian” designs.
- Unless the illustrations are abstract or stylized, characters should be unique and genuine with distinctive physical features from one character to the next.

#### CRITERIA FOR NOMINATION

- Author and or illustrator must be recognized by the Indian community of which they claim to be a part and be connected to the people.
- Books should be published within three years since the last awards were given.
- Books may be nominated for consideration by the AIYLA Jury, publishers, librarians, authors, illustrators, or others.

#### BOOK AWARD JURY MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES

- The AIYLA Jury will consist of a minimum of seven members.
- The AILA president will appoint the Jury chair and members.
- Jurors must hold AILA membership and have experience working in libraries.
- Two-thirds of the jury must be recognized members of their nation/tribe/community.
- The jury should include geographic representation from on or near reservations, villages, and rural, suburban, and urban communities, whenever possible.
- Jurors should have experience working with children and youth, and/or teaching reviewing, or writing for children or young adults.
- Jurors should exhibit a working knowledge of criteria used to evaluate books about American Indians for young people.
- Jurors will serve for a term of four years on 3 staggered terms.
- Jurors may nominate titles in each of the three categories.
- Jurors will make the final decision concerning books accepted for nomination and awards.
- The Jury will reach its final decision by consensus.

#### TIMETABLE

- Titles may be submitted at any time during the two-year award cycle.
- Publishers are requested to submit sufficient copies of each title being nominated for each Jury member. The Jury Chair will provide addresses of Jurors to publishers.
- In the case of picture books, awards will be given to both author and illustrator, if not the same person.
- Awards will consist of a beaded medallion and cash prize for each winner.
- Winners will be announced at the Midwinter ALA Conference every other January, at the same time as the other ALA Book Award announcements.
- Awards will be presented at that year's ALA Annual Conference at a special AILA award reception.

#### RESOURCES CONSULTED

Caldwell-Wood, Naomi and Lisa A. Mitten. *I is Not for Indian: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People*, 1991.

Hirschfelder, Arlene, Paulette Fairbanks Molin, and Yvonne Wakin. *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A reader and bibliography*, 1999.

Reese, Debbie. "Markers of Authenticity" and "Problematic Elements that Signify Stereotypes and Bias," 2002.

Slapin, Beverly, Doris Seale, Rosemary Gonzales. *How to Tell the Difference: A Checklist*. Oyate, 1987.