## Artistic Techniques in Picture Book Art

### Elements of Art
- Line
- Shape
- Texture
- Color
- Value
- Perspective
- Space

### Medium

*What material does the artist use to create the illustrations?*
*Is the medium appropriate for the book? Is it effective?*
*Is the artist successful working in the selected medium?*

- Watercolor
- Oil paint
- Acrylic
- Gouache
- Tempera
- Pencil
- Pen and ink
- Pastels
- Scratchboard
- Woodcut print
- Linoleum print
- Collage
- Cut paper
- Pulp paint
- Fabric art
- Realia
- Photography
- Digital art
- Mixed media

### Composition

*The plan, placement, or arrangement of artistic elements on each page to achieve unity or a specific effect.*

### Style

*Is the style appropriate to the story, the mood, and the audience?*

- Realistic
- Abstract
- Impressionistic
- Surrealistic
- Expressionistic
- Naïve
- Folk art
- Cartoon art

### Sources consulted


Randolph Caldecott Medal terms and criteria

Terms
1. The Medal shall be awarded annually to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children published by an American publisher in the United States in English during the preceding year. There are no limitations as to the character of the picture book except that the illustrations be original work. Honor books may be named. These shall be books that are also truly distinguished.
2. The award is restricted to artists who are citizens or residents of the United States. Books published in a U.S. territory or U.S. commonwealth are eligible.
3. The committee in its deliberations is to consider only books eligible for the award, as specified in the terms.

Definitions
1. A “picture book for children” as distinguished from other books with illustrations, is one that essentially provides the child with a visual experience. A picture book has a collective unity of story-line, theme, or concept, developed through the series of pictures of which the book is comprised.
2. A “picture book for children” is one for which children are an intended potential audience. The book displays respect for children’s understandings, abilities, and appreciations. Children are defined as persons of ages up to and including fourteen and picture books for this entire age range are to be considered.
3. “Distinguished” is defined as:
   a. Marked by eminence and distinction; noted for significant achievement.
   b. Marked by excellence in quality.
   c. Marked by conspicuous excellence or eminence.
   d. Individually distinct.
4. The artist is the illustrator or co-illustrators. The artist may be awarded the medal posthumously.
5. The term "original work" may have several meanings. For purposes of these awards, it is defined as follows: "Original work" means that the illustrations were created by this artist and no one else. Further, "original work" means that the illustrations are presented here for the first time and have not been previously published elsewhere in this or any other form. Illustrations reprinted or compiled from other sources are not eligible.
6. “American picture book in the United States” means that books first published in previous years in other countries are not eligible. Books published simultaneously in the U.S. and another country may be eligible. Books published in a U.S. territory or U.S. commonwealth are eligible.
7. “In English” means that the committee considers only books written and published in English. This requirement DOES NOT limit the use of words or phrases in another language where appropriate in context.
8. “Published...in the preceding year” means that the book has a publication date in that year, was available for purchase in that year, and has a copyright date no later than that year. A book might have a copyright date prior to the year under consideration but, for various reasons, was not published until the year under consideration. If a book is published prior to its year of copyright as stated in the book, it shall be considered in its year of copyright as stated in the book. The intent of the definition is that every book be eligible for consideration, but that no book be considered in more than one year.
9. “Resident” specifies that author has established and maintains a residence in the United States, U.S. territory, or U.S. commonwealth as distinct from being a casual or occasional visitor.
10. The term, “only the books eligible for the award,” specifies that the committee is not to consider the entire body of the work by an artist or whether the artist has previously won the award. The committee’s decision is to be made following deliberation about books of the specified calendar year.

Criteria
1. In identifying a “distinguished American picture book for children,” defined as illustration, committee members need to consider:
   a. Excellence of execution in the artistic technique employed;
   b. Excellence of pictorial interpretation of story, theme, or concept;
   c. Appropriateness of style of illustration to the story, theme or concept;
   d. Delineation of plot, theme, characters, setting, mood or information through the pictures;
   e. Excellence of presentation in recognition of a child audience.
2. The only limitation to graphic form is that the form must be one which may be used in a picture book. The book must be a self-contained entity, not dependent on other media (i.e., sound, film or computer program) for its enjoyment.
3. Each book is to be considered as a picture book. The committee is to make its decision primarily on the illustration, but other components of a book are to be considered especially when they make a book less effective as a children’s picture book. Such other components might include the written text, the overall design of the book, etc.

Note: The committee should keep in mind that the award is for distinguished illustrations in a picture book and for excellence of pictorial presentation for children. The award is not for didactic intent or for popularity.

*Adopted by the ALSC board, January 1978. Revised, Midwinter 1987. Revised, Annual 2008*
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<th>Title/Author/Illustrator</th>
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Reading Picture Books 101

by Robin L. Smith

1. Look at the cover. Feel the cover. Turn the book over. Does the illustration wrap around or is there something different on the back? Note that. Unless there are blurbs. I hate blurbs on picture books. I really hate the phrase “New York Times bestselling author.” Children don’t care.

2. Take the paper jacket off and see whether the board cover is different. If it’s different, why? Sometimes there’s a treat on the inside of the paper jacket. I like a surprise or two here myself.

3. Now examine the endpapers. Sometimes they’re decorated, sometimes not. Are the back endpapers the same as the front? If not, do the changes make sense?

4. Peruse the title page. Decorated? Plain? If it’s dull, I take note. Since the title page often contains a lot of white space, this is when I usually notice if the paper choice works well. Can you see through to the next page? (Ick.)

5. Read the book all the way through without reading the words. LOOK AT THE PICTURES VERY SLOWLY. Read from left to right, paying close attention to the page turns, white space, and pacing. Look at every inch of every spread. Note anything that is confusing.

6. Read the book with the words. Do the pictures and text play nicely together? How do line, color, texture, etc., help tell the story? Follow one character from beginning to end. Do it again with others, especially animals. Characters need to stay consistent from page to page.

7. Go back and check every gutter. Every damn one of them. Does the art match up across the gutter? Is a main character sliced in half? Does anything “get lost in the gutter”? (gulp)

Then, and only then, can you read the book as it’s intended to be read: sit on the couch under a good lamp and read the whole thing, preferably aloud. If after that you want to read it again, you might just be on to something.

Robin L. Smith is a coauthor of The Horn Book’s Calling Caldecott blog. This is a revised version of her post “How to Read a Picture Book, the Caldecott Edition.”
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Selected Sources about Picture Book Art


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Reading the Art in Caldecott Award Books
A Guide to the Illustrations

By Heidi K. Hammond and Gail D. Nordstrom

Reading the Art in Caldecott Award Books is a practical and easy-to-use reference handbook explaining what makes the art in Caldecott Medal and Honor books distinguished. It is a useful manual for librarians, teachers, and others who want to better understand picture book illustration. This book includes many useful components:

- Short entries about fifty-six books
- Information on styles and media
- Artistic analysis of the illustrations
- Appendixes on selected sources for further reading, Randolph Caldecott Medal terms and criteria, bibliography of entries, and a list of Caldecott winners
- Glossary of art terms
- Indexes of author-illustrator-title, media, and style

This book, used as a handbook in conjunction with Caldecott Award books, provides readers with ready-to-use information they can share with children and others, while helping to build confidence in one’s ability to talk about art in all picture books.

Heidi Hammond, Ph.D has 23 years of experience as a school librarian at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and coordinates the school library media specialist portion of the MLIS program at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Hammond served on the 2011 Randolph Caldecott Award Committee that selected A Sick Day for Amos McGee. She was a member of the 2013 Margaret A. Edwards Award Committee that selected Tamora Pierce. She has also served on the editorial board of SLR-School Library Research.

Gail Nordstrom, M.L.I.S. rediscovered the power and delight of children’s books as a youth services librarian for Stillwater (Minnesota) Public Library, where she worked with children, teens, and caregivers for nineteen years. She is currently the public library consultant for Viking Library System in west central Minnesota. She continues to share her enthusiasm for children’s literature in workshops and conferences in the state. Nordstrom was on the 2011 Randolph Caldecott Award Committee that selected A Sick Day for Amos McGee. She was also a member of the 2002 John Newbery Award Committee that selected A Single Shard. She has organized local Newbery and Caldecott mock discussions for librarians and teachers since 1997. Gail has served as judge for the Minnesota Book Awards and is a member of the Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award Selection Committee.

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