

## CYRM Nominees 2006/2007 Summaries for ACRA Newsletter

### **PRIMARY (Grades K-2)**



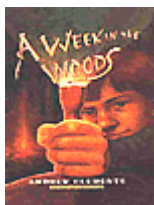
*The Best Pet of All* by David LaRochelle. Illustrated by Hanako Wakiyama. (Dutton Children's Books, 2004)

After asking his mom for a dog over and over, and always being turned down, a little boy decides to suggest a new pet. He chooses a dragon. The boy's mother hesitantly agrees to him getting this pet, if he can even find one. The boy does just that, but quickly finds out that dragons can be hard to deal with - they don't put anything away, don't help with chores, are always making a mess, and constantly causing problems. When he asks the dragon to leave, the dragon refuses. The boy uses good judgement and tells his mom that dragons don't like dogs. His Mom decides that a dog is what he needs. When the dog shows up, the dragon disappears and the boy decides that "a dog is the best pet of all."



*My Lucky Day* by Keiko Kasza. (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2003).

After a yummy looking piglet shows up on fox's doorstep, the fox is sure that he will have the best meal ever. However, in a sneaky way, the piglet avoids his fate and instead gets pampered by the fox! Piglet gets such luxuries as a bath to get rid of all the dirt, a delicious meal to fatten him up, and a fabulous massage to make him more tender and juicy. Exhausted with all these meal preparations, the fox falls asleep while giving the massage and the piglet heads home. He keeps himself busy planning the next address to visit. Will it be wolf or bear or someone else? The pictures are great and capture the mischief of this cute little trickster.

**INTERMEDIATE (Grades 3-5)**

*A Week in the Woods* by Andrew Clements. (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2002)

Mark's wealthy family is moving, he is leaving his private school, and will start the next school year at a new private school. He will have to go to the public school in the new town for a little while to finish the school year. He doesn't want to and decides he is going to be miserable about it. Mark's teacher tries to reach him, but once he learns who Mark's family is, he decides that Mark is a "wealthy slacker" and treats him as such. Every year, the entire 5<sup>th</sup> grade class goes to the woods for a week. When there, Mark is found with a knife (that actually belongs to his friend) and he refuses to tell on his friend. After feeling like he is being treated unfairly, he decides to go hiking on his own. His teacher follows. They both spend the night out in the woods, where the teacher hurts his ankle and Mark needs to help him get back to camp. After a lot of discussion, they realize that they are both to blame and form a relationship.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL/JR. HIGH (Grades 6-8)**

*Al Capone Does My Shirts* by Gennifer Choldenko. (Putnam, 2004)

12-year-old Moose Flanagan and his family move to Alcatraz Island in 1935, where his father gets a job in the prison. His older sister, Natalie, is severely autistic and his mother has been obsessed with getting her "cured." She has been sent to many schools and odd hospitals, none of which have helped. The families last hope is getting her into a school in San Francisco. Moose is almost entirely responsible for his sister, while also dealing with being in his new school, living in a strange place and feeling isolated, and longing for the warden's daughter, Piper. Juggling Natalie's daily moods, school work, yearning for Piper, and worry over his folks, Moose tries to please everyone. His greatest fear is that somehow he has caused Natalie's problem. With Piper's help, Moose eventually comes to terms with his new situation.

**YOUNG ADULT (Grades 9-12)**

*Emako Blue* by Brenda Woods. (Putnam, 2004)

Emako is the new girl in Monterey's school; the two meet in chorus. Emako comes from the rough streets of South Central Los Angeles; Monterey's family is more financially secure. They become friends, and Emako's singing career begins to take off, until where she comes from seems to get in the way. Their friendship helps them grow and find the confidence to have relationships with boys they have crushes on, Eddie and Jamal. Another girl, Savannah is a bit jealous of Emako. Tragedy strikes the friends, and readers experience this tragedy through the eyes of these characters. The characters take turns narrating chapters. Financial problems, gang issues (Emako's older brother was involved in a gang and was recently released from jail), and budding romantic relationships are issues that are discussed throughout the book. This book really shows the reality of being poor, of broken homes, and of money not being enough to make you happy.

**PICTURE BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS (All Ages)**

*The Cats in Krasinski Square* by Karen Hesse. Illustrated by Wendy Watson. (Scholastic Press, 2004)

This book tells a powerful story of a young Jewish girl who, together with her older sister, who fight the Nazi occupation of Warsaw. After escaping from the Jewish ghetto, the girl avoids detection by “wearing my Polish look, walking my Polish walk. She finds joy in playing with the city's abandoned cats, who show her holes in the ghetto wall, which the girl's older sister and their resistance friends will use to pass supplies shipped by train to Warsaw. The Gestapo learns of the scheme, and soldiers wait at the train station with dogs. Luckily, the cats inspire a solution; they distract the dogs and protect the supplies. It's an empowering story about the bravery and impact of young people.