

Andrea Schneider

### 2.3 Reading Winners

Uptown by Bryan Collier  
Coretta Scott King Award

I was very impressed with the content and creativity of this book. After reviewing the criteria for the Coretta Scott King Award I have to agree that Uptown is well deserving of the award. The award has many criteria points that a book has to embrace and I will agree that it does hit all of the criteria. These award winners are expected to portray the aspect of the black experience in some point of time. Uptown does a great job of portraying the present life for a young African American boy who lives in Harlem. The author/illustrator is must be African American. Bryan Collier is an African American who grew up with an early interest in art, specifically collage. He was able to illustrate his own books after struggling to be recognized for his art within others books. Uptown is published in the US and is Bryan Collier's original work. The plot is very clear in that it depicts the life in which one lives in Harlem. It portrays the many familiar, interesting parts of life in Harlem. The characters blend in well with the life portrayed and the illustrations show the love that one has for his home in Harlem. This book fits the age range of Preschool-grade 4. The language throughout the book is easy to read and understand, for example when he refers to the brownstone apartments that line the block as chocolate bars. The illustrations also relate exactly to the text which will aide in young children understanding. From what I know of Harlem, this text is accurate with the setting and life in Harlem. The illustrations in Uptown are amazing. I have never read a book that showed collage for the illustrations. The pieces of paper scraps that look abstract yet create a structure alongside portraits makes for an intense sense of truly understanding the details within this life. I really enjoyed this book and I intend to read it to my students this week. Prior to this assignment, I can't imagine I would have been interested in reading this book.

The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco  
Sydney Taylor Award

I have read this book many times because I enjoy books written by Patricia Polacco and I try to read all of them. Even if this was not an award winner, I would have read this book. The award is given to books that portray the Jewish experiences from an authentic viewpoint. The Sydney Taylor Award has three categories: younger readers, older readers, and teen readers. The authors for this award do not have to be Jewish. One of the criteria for this award is the book must have literary merit. When I read this I wasn't exactly sure what that meant so I researched the definition. In the end there is no set in stone definition for what truly defines "literary merit". The one part of the definition stated that it should have some aesthetic value. In this definition, I would say that The Keeping Quilt does represent literary merit. There is an emotional connection within this story. To me, when there is a family connection or bond that is being represented, there is emotion being pulled from deep inside. The bond between grandparents, parents, and children is so important. In this book, the fact that a quilt was made to help

savor the two things she had brought with her from Russia was a great concept. And to have that quilt passed on through generations shows the importance of keeping roots close to you know matter where you go. Throughout the book, Jewish content is represented with the babushka being represented, prayers to start the Sabbath, the traditional proposal, wedding ceremonial (past and present rituals and how they changed through the years), and gifts presented to newborns. There are also times that reference the food they ate. The book is also a good book for young readers to listen to and read. The illustrations are not real colorful but they are truly hand drawn illustrations and I think that kids enjoy seeing that someone actually did draw the pictures with what might look like a pencil to kids. After looking through and reading the book again, I have decided that the Sydney Taylor Award was awarded appropriately to Patricia Polacco's The Keeping Quilt.

Gershon's Monster-A Story for the Jewish New Year by Eric A. Kimmel  
Sydney Taylor Award

Gershon's Monster was a fun book to read. I liked the way that bad decisions and rude behaviors were represented as little monsters swept into a closet and then dumped into a lake. I thought this was a great book for children to read to aide in letting them know that if you're not sorry for what you've done and you do not ask for forgiveness when they're wrong, that bad things may come upon them. I know the part where his children are being taken is a little over the heads of some children it can easily be redone to gear for children. The book is age appropriate for the young readers category in which the Sydney Taylor Award is given. I do think that this book also shows literary merit in that brings out behaviors that show much emotion whether it was through Gershon making bad decisions and not feeling bad about them or through the *tzaddik* who sees how Gershon is behaving but he truly feels bad for him when he leaves his house. The illustrations also show much emotion in the faces of the characters. The book discusses Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, as well as the *tzaddik*, which is a righteous person. In order to understand these concepts I had to do a little research to know exactly how accurate it was. Prior to completing my research I did not think that this book was representative of the Sydney Taylor Award based on the fictional ideas throughout (monsters, the lake actually "taking" the children). Now that I know and understand a little more about Rosh Hashanah and the importance of the *tzaddik*, I do believe this book deserves the Sydney Taylor Award.

Rules by Cynthia Lord  
Schneider Family Award

When I read the class posting about the Schneider Family Award, I was immediately drawn to learning more about the books that have won this award and getting my hands on some of the literature. Being a special education teacher I see the struggle that students go through as students with disabilities and I want so badly to better understand the struggles that other members in the family must go through. Rules did a great job of representing the emotions that come with having a sibling or child with special needs. There are three broad areas in which the committee looks at in order to present the award to

books: content, style, illustration). These books can be fictional, biographical, or non-fictional. Therefore, Rules hits one of those. Rules is a book written from the view point of a 12 year old girl who has a brother with autism and how her life is affected by his disability. This is a fictional book but the author has personal experiences in which helped provide situations to incorporate into the story. This book does not show how to overcome the struggle with autism; it merely shows the lifestyle that comes to a family when one member is affected by a disability. The content represented throughout this book that depicts the characteristics of a person with autism is very accurate and well portrayed. The content area of the Schneider Family Award is very well represented in this book. As for the style of Rules, the use of language throughout the book is exactly how I have viewed autism in my life. When the language is incorporated within text, a person gets a true feeling of what the character is going through and can empathize and laugh while reading the situations that occur. When I read this book, I laughed at so many things because I have worked with students with autism and even though some of the situations are frustrating you can relate to the characters on such a personal level that you just have to laugh and say, yes, I know how that is. This is also a book that stands on its own with no other books as part of a series. The third part of the criteria is Illustration. This book is a novel and does not have illustrations therefore, the criteria does not pertain to this book. Again, I have to agree with presenting Rules with the Schneider Family Award.

Prior to completing this assignment I was prepared to say that at least one or two of the books did not, in my mind, represent the award well. I was surprised when I sat down with the criteria for each award and with each book and couldn't find an area where the book did not represent the award well.