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NCTE's Elementary Section: Awarding Excellence in Children's Publishing

"Before his illness, most things had come easily to him. Now he knew what it was like to be helpless, to be weak, to be dependent on others through no fault of your own.... Now he had learned to concentrate on one thing at at time. And he had learned to wait for results."

From Franklin Delano Roosevelt by Russell Freedman, winner of the 1991 Orbis Pictus Award

While elementary teachers were not represented at NCTE's first convention, the Elementary Section was officially formed at the second one in 1912. According to J.N. Hook, the first meeting focused on "decrying a 'Reign of Red Ink" in teaching composition. Walter Barnes coined the phrase in his essay that he read before the 1912 Elementary Section. In it, he complained of the rigid, routine nature of English classes. He asserted:

"As accurately as I can judge from a rather brief experience and limited observation, I believe that the children in the grades live, so far as composition work is concerned, in an absolute monarchy, in which they are the subjects, the teacher the king (more often, the queen), and the red-ink pen the royal scepter (1913, p. 158).

By no means were the concerns of Elementary Section members limited to grading student papers. As illustrated by the mission statement on its **website**, this Section addresses a variety of issues in elementary education: "Our primary task is to connect and support teachers as they work closely with students, administrators, and families to develop and promote lifelong literacy learning. We cordially welcome all educators interested in reading, writing and the language arts."

One way that the Elementary Section fulfilled the literacy and reading portion of their mission was through its establishment of the Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children. Named after what is believed to be the first book written for children, *Orbis Pictus*(1657) by Johannes Amos Comenius, this award serves to recognize excellent children's nonfiction. Committee members select one work to honor every year. By awarding and therefore promoting these exceptional works of nonfiction, the Section hopes to encourage reading. After a successful three years of running the award process, the award committee of the Elementary Section was able to convince the Council to continue the program as part of NCTE's larger award network. To

learn more about the Orbis Pictus Award, and how it began and developed, take a look at the featured records below.

Contents: (To enlarge an image, click on it and it will open in a new window)

NCTE Approval of the Orbis Pictus Award Correspondence, First Winner of Orbis Pictus Announcing the Winners Certificates for Honor Books NCTE Renewal of Orbis Pictus Award

NCTE Approval of the Orbis Pictus Award

In 1989, Evelyn B. Freeman proposed the Orbis Pictus Award to the Executive Board. They readily approved it, praising her development of the procedures for the award. "It's one of the solidest designs we've received," Deputy Executive Director Charles Suhor wrote. However, the Council did not yet grant the committee permanent status. The committee was allowed to give the award for just the 1990 year.

Item: Correspondence approving the Orbis Pictus Award (1989) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/72/003

NCIUS	3	/ 1	ational Council of Teachers of English 111 Kenyon Road, Urbans, Illinois 61801 elephone (217) 328-3870
1988-89 Executive C	ommittee	ding NonJeffen S F	ax (217) 328-9645
March 1, 1989			
Evelyn Freeman 499 Riley Avenue Worthington, OH			
Dear Evelyn,			
Award for Outstan modifications not accelerate the pro- you submitted, bri asking Michael Soy you within a coupl to send the annour Internal committe nominations and be Executive Commit for nominations, o numdated with non nominations from	nding Nonfiction for CC ed in the February ager ocess, Tm enclosing with ingring the contents in il oconer to draft a model le of weeks. By late Mi neement to journals and e matters noted in the e matters noted in the ement be handled by you ooks (Item 3) and selec- man be handled by you the subcommittee ease tite noted with referen of competition what r to limit nominations immiantions and books, I f within the Council's rais	ildren at its Februar da item that I sent h this latter a redra- ine with the refinem latter for submission arch, you should hav publishers, as note refinements-e.g., y tion of a subset of c a subset of c a the appropriate ch year if you see fit her it's advisable to to coming from NCT assume you'd want to nk.	to you earling. To lead version fits the materials with sciences. Also, Fm is a science of the science of the top of the science of the science of the science of the science of the in your projected timeline. Just science of the science of the milites members to serve to do no. Finally, the s- to do no. Finally, the s- would be useful to assess cast a wide net in calling E members. It you're consider calling for
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The letter that Deputy Executive Director Charles Suhor wrote to Freeman, notifying her of the Council's approval of the Orbis Pictus Award.

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Correspondence, First Winner of Orbis Pictus Award

Jean Fritz, author of the *The Great Little Madison*, received the first Orbis Pictus Award. Her book traced the life of James Madison from his sickly childhood to his two terms as the fourth president of the United States. Praised for its accessible, yet vivid language, Fritz's book was considered an excellent portrait of one of America's founding fathers. Her approach to reaching elementary students can be seen in the following sample of her prose: "Six weeks later independence was declared. James Madison was only twenty-five years old and he might have thought that at last he had found his career, but he probably gave his own future little thought. It was only the country that concerned him. America had a chance now to become an independent nation, and it had better turn out to be a good one." This letter of congratulations invited Fritz to the Books for Children Luncheon at NCTE's annual convention to receive the award.

Item: Correspondence notifying Fritz of her award (1991) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/72/003

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NGUE	0	1111 Ke Telepho	l Council of Teachers of English nyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801 ne (217) 328-3870
1989-90 Executive Co	mmittee	Pax (2)	7) 328-9645
October 8, 1990	1		
Mrs. Jean Fritz 51 Bellewood Av Dobbs Ferry, NY	venue		
Dear Jean:			
congratulations	ne National Counc on being named t or Outstanding Nor	the recipient of	the first Orbis
Luncheon in Atl luncheon will b to 1:30 p.m. ir Floor. I under Freeman, Chair Elementary Lang Please feel fre	vite you to be our lanta, where the a se held on Saturdin in the Atlanta Hill stand that you hi of the Committee guage Arts Classr se to contact me o questions that you	award will be pr ay, November 17, ton, Grand Ballr ave already talk on Using Nonfic com, who will pr or my assistant,	from 11:30 a.m. com East, 2nd ed with Evelyn tion in the esent the award.
Sincerely,			
Miles Wrers Executive Direc	ll otor		
cc: Evelyn Fre			
Jacqui Jos	seph-Biddle		
Prolident Sala KJ, Chine University of Colomba, Boulder Preddent-Elext	Chair, Elementary Section Barbarh Kiefer University of Oregon, Eugene Chair, Secondary Section	Representative-so-Large Jeff Colub Shomena High School Seandr, Washington	Chair, CEE Robert C, Smill, Jr. Virginia Toch Backburg, Virginia
Shifey Baley-Janes Georgia State University, Adams Vice Provident	Failt Z. Schullerom Guiderland Cerent Scheel District Guiderland, New York	Representative-at-Large Scan Stres Newcoste, Maire	Exective Director
James E. Davia Chio University, Adrens	Associate Chair, Secondary Section Carrie A. Williams Methodia School Digeter	Chair, CSEEC Wrntell Schwarz Adla Sproman High Schuel	Milas Myers Deputy Executive Director
Past Provident Jane: Emig Rosper, University, Non Dramwick	St. Louis, Missouri Otair, Calliere Section	Prate Ves, Basic Chair, CCCC	Charles Sales Deputy Executive Director L. Day Objectory
	Tilly Warrock University of Wyoming, Lammie	Jane E. Pennicu Richland College Dullas, Texas	L. Das Christian Executive Administrator Stati C. Anderson

A letter from Executive Director Miles Myers congratulating Fritz on winning the Orbis Pictus Award.

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Announcing the Winners

Promotional materials to advertise the award and its winners included these bookmarks and flyers. The seal on the bookmarks is from the title page of the book, *Orbis Pictus*. The phrase on the seal, "Omnia sponte fluant absit violentia rebus," means "Let all things flow freely, let violence in all things be absent."

Item: Bookmarks and flyer (1990, 1991, 1993) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/72/800

THE NCTE 90-443 1990 ORBIS PICTUS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING NONFICTION FOR CHILDREN

0

Pictus A

For Outstanding Nonfiction For Children
Presented

to

The world of children's literature contains a variety of genres, all of which have appeal to the diverse interests of children, as well as potential for classroom teaching. However, in recent years nonfiction or informational books have emerged as a very attractive, exciting, and popular genre. The NCTE Committee on Using Nonfiction in the Elementary Language Arts Classroom recommended the establishment of a new award for promoting and recognizing excel-lence in the writing of nonfiction for children. The first award is being presented to Jean Fritz for The Great Little Madison. Two honor books were also selected: The Great American Gold Rush, by Rhoda Blumberg, and The News about Dinosaurs, by Patricia Lauber.

THE NCTE 1991 ORBIS PICTUS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING NONFICTION FOR CHILDREN



"Omnia sponte fluant absit violentia rebus." Let all things flow freely, let violence in all things be absent.

> Presented to

Russell Freedman

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Jean Fritz ^{for} *The Great Little Madison* The world of children's literature contains a variety of genres, all of which have appeal to the diverse interests of children, as well as potential for classroom teaching. In recent years, however, nonfiction or informational books have emerged as a very attractive, exciting, and popular genre. NCTE, through the Committee on Using Nonfiction in the Elementary Language Arts Classroom, has established an award for promoting and recognizing excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children. The name, Orbis Pictus, commemorates the work of Johannes Amos Comenius, Orbis Pictus-The World in Pictures. (1657), considered to be the first book actually planned for children.

1991

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Clarion) by Russell Freedman **Honor Books** Arctic Memories (Holt) by Normee Ekoomiak Seeing Earth from Space (Orchard) by Patricia Lauber

1990

The Great Little Madison (Putnam) by Jean Fritz Honor Books The Great American Goldrush (Bradbury) by Rhoda Blumberg The News about Dinosaurs (Bradbury) by Patricia Lauber

"Before his illness, most things had come easily to him. Now he knew what it was like to be helpless, to be weak, to be dependent on others through no fault of your own. ... Now he had learned to concentrate on one thing at a time. And he had learned to wait for results. 'If you have spent two years in bed trying to wiggle your big toe,' he said, 'everything else seems easy."

from Freedman, Russell. 1990. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. New York: Clarion, p. 56.





vorld of children's literature contains a variety of genres, all of which have appeal to diverse interests of children, as well as potential for classroom teaching. In recent years, vever, nonfiction or informational books have emerged as a very attractive, exciting, popular genre. The National Council of Teachers of English, through its Committee Jsing Nonfiction in the Elementary Language Arts Classroom, has established an award promoting and recognizing excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children. The e, Orbis Pictus, commemorates the work of Johannes Amos Comenius, Orbis Pictus-World in Pictures (1657), considered to be the first book actually planned for children.

dren of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp erry Stanley (Crown Publishers, Inc.) or Books

ing with Artists by Pat Cummings (Bradbury Press) te Back, Salmon by Molly Cone (Sierra Club Books)



esented to

Jerry Stanley

for Children of the Dust Bowl:

The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp

ht: The Journey of Charles Lindbergh tobert Burleigh and Mike Wimmer (Philomel Books)

or Books Is Your Time! The African American Struggle for Freedom Valter Dean Myers (HarperCollins) rie Vision: The Life and Times of Solomon Butcher am Conrad (HarperCollins)

uklin Delano Roosevelt ussell Freedman (Clarion) or Books

ic Memories by Normee Ekoomiak (Holt)

ng Earth from Space by Patricia Lauber (Orchard)



Bookmarks and flyer that advertise the 1990, 1991, and 1993 winners of the Orbis Pictus Award.

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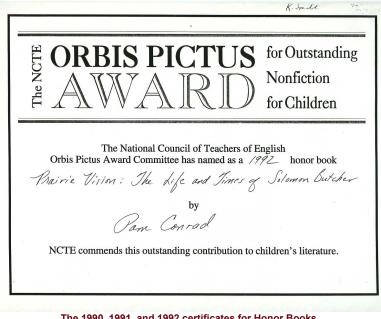
Certificates for Honor Books

In addition to selecting the winner, the committee also recognizes up to five honor books. These authors receive a certificate, as well as a mention on NCTE's Orbis Pictus Award website and promotional materials. The certificates below are from the early period of the award. They recognized The Great American Gold Rush by Rhoda Blumberg, which chronicles the emigration of people to California in pursuit of finding gold; Arctic Memories by Normee Ekoomiak, which describes Inuit culture; and Prairie Vision: The Life and Times of Solomon Butcher, by Pam Conrad, which tells the tales of pioneers in early 20th-centry Nebraska.

Item: Copy of Certificates for Honor Books (1990, 1991, and 1992)

To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/72/800

K. Smith CTUS for Outstanding The NCTE **ORBIS** P Nonfiction for Children The National Council of Teachers of English Orbis Pictus Award Committee has named as a 1990 honor book The Sheat American Gold Rush by Rhoda Blumberg NCTE commends this outstanding contribution to children's literature. K. Smill **ORBIS PICTUS** for Outstanding The NCTE Nonfiction for Children The National Council of Teachers of English Orbis Pictus Award Committee has named as a /99/honor book arctic Memories by Normec Ekoomiak NCTE commends this outstanding contribution to children's literature.



The 1990, 1991, and 1992 certificates for Honor Books.

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NCTE Renewal of Orbis Pictus Award

Although the Orbis Pictus Award was originally meant to last for a single year, Chair Freeman received a twoyear extension from the Executive Committee. In a memo to committee members, she explained: "I have already requested a two-year extension so that our book can be published and we can take the Orbis Pictus Award through three cycles and establish a procedure for it to be continued by NCTE." Her efforts paid off. When the extension expired in 1993, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to continue the Orbis Pictus Award. Today, the award is still a part of NCTE, with 2010 marking its 20th anniversary.

Item: (1990, 1993) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/72/800

OSU	The Ohio State University	Newark Campus University Drive Newark, Ohio 43055-9990 Phone 614 386-3321	- R 1997	CLEE 2-93 Executive Co	anmittee	National Council of 1111 W. Kenyon Ro Telephone (217) 322 Fax (217) 328-9645	ad, Urbana, Illinois 61801-109 -3870
From Evie Free RE: Update Happy Springl I 1. A warm welco member. 2. Recipients of Award: Jean Frit Honor Booker Pat Honor Bo	CTE Committee on Using Non an, Chair (size hope everyone is doing wel me to Barbara Elleman, our the Orbis Pictus Award: <u>I The Great Little Madiano</u> reiona Luuber <u>The News Anou</u> do Blumberg <u>The Great Amer</u> ospectus is currently unde a Blumberg <u>The Great Amer</u> ospectus is currently unde a Blumberg <u>The Great Amer</u> ospectus is currently unde ittlee roater is enclosed. nominating books for the ittlee roater is enclosed. nominating books for the response by mid-May. Use can use last year's co ur committee was to termin we already requested a two no Epublished and we can tinued by NCTE. Our requese May NCTE Executive Board comments, suggestions, or o	fiction 1. News to share: new committee <u>1. Dinosaurs</u> <u>1. Can Gold Rush</u> creview by NCTE. 1991 Orbis Pictus pyright date. 11 at the address me denciosed. tate at the 1990 year extensions so tate the 1990 year extensions so tate the 1990 year extensions so tate the 1900 tate at the 1990 year extensions so tate the 1900 tate at the 1	Peb Eve By Wor Dem did dod dod dod dod dod dod dod dod dod	ruary 24, 1 lyn Freeman Riley Aven Hiley Aven Freeman Pleased to Inionally ap procedural n't go into unitered to inistrative policy are in, thanks rs truly, Janie Hyd Janie Hyd Xaren Shi Sarensen States Shi Sarensen Shi S	993 He 43085 an: report that the I proved continuation contained on the proved continuation of the second second of the second of th	on of the Orbis P ration, you made : rd. The Executi g these things, the matters that the Executive Com and helpful repo	ictus Award. In various comments ve Committee out Karen Smith can be handled nittee if matters

From left to right, Freeman's memo explaining to committee members about continuing the award in 1991, and the letter informing Freeman of the Executive Committee's decision to continue the award in 1993.

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