

CFP: Neglected Newberys: A Critical Reassessment at the Centennial

Volume editors: Sara L. Schwebel and Jocelyn Van Tuyl

In anticipation of the one hundredth anniversary of the American Library Association's Newbery Medal (1922-2022), submissions are welcomed for a volume devoted to critically-neglected Newbery Award-winners.

About the Volume

Since the inception of the Newbery Medal in 1922, Newbery novels have had an outsized influence on American children's literature, figuring perennially on publisher's lists, on library and bookstore shelves, and in K-12 school curricula. As such, they offer a compelling window into the history of U.S. children's literature and publishing as well as changing societal attitudes about what books are "best" for American children. Nevertheless, many Newbery Award winners—even the most popular and frequently taught titles—have attracted scant critical attention.

This volume offers a critically- and historically-grounded analysis of representative Newbery Medal books and interrogates the disjunction between the books' omnipresence and influence, on the one hand, and the critical silence surrounding them, on the other.

The editors seek at least one previously unpublished essay per decade (1920s-2010s), with each essay to focus primarily on a single Newbery Medal (not Newbery Honor) title for which little or no literary scholarship exists. We welcome submissions from both emerging and established scholars.

We specifically seek a diversity of Newbery authors, genres, themes, and book settings, but also investigations of how diversity is treated or, especially for earlier works, silenced in the texts.

Avenues for exploration include: neglected categories and sub-genres (horse books, maritime adventure stories, regional literature, retold folktales, one-hit wonders for children by well-known authors); reception and book history (alterations of text to avoid offensive language and imagery, both immediately after the Medal and decades later); critical readings of problematic texts; Newbery winners and their archives; hypotheses regarding critical neglect: the rise of Children's Literature as an academic field long after the Medal's inception; the disjunction between the Newbery's historical whiteness and heteronormativity and current developments in literary criticism; a possible disconnect between librarians who award the medal, K-12 teachers who recommend the books, and university professors who are rewarded for publishing literary criticism.

Submission Information

E-mail the editors (schwebel@sc.edu and vantuyl@ncf.edu) for access to the spreadsheet of books on which we are soliciting contributions, contributor resources, and additional specifications to ensure continuity throughout the volume.

Deadline

The deadline for initial proposals of approximately 500 words is April 1, 2018.

We anticipate requesting completed essays of 6000-7000 words by early 2019 (subject to the publisher's requirements).