

Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award 2006 Nominees

Al Capone Does My Shirts by Gennifer Choldenko

Moose Flannagan moves with his family to Alcatraz so his dad can work as a prison guard and his sister, Natalie, can attend a special school. But Natalie has autism, and when she's denied admittance to the school, the stark setting of Alcatraz begins to unravel the tenuous coping mechanisms Moose's family has used for dealing with her disorder. When Moose meets Piper, the cute daughter of the Warden, he knows right off she's trouble. But she's also strangely irresistible. All Moose wants to do is protect Natalie, live up to his parents' expectations, and stay out of trouble. But on Alcatraz, trouble is never very far away.

Any Small Goodness by Tony Johnston

Los Angeles is a place of movie stars and fast cars and people who are too rich and people who are too poor. An area of freeway chases and drive-bys and death. But there's another L.A., one where warmth and humor and humanity pervade. Where a tacqueria sign declares: "One cause, one people, one taco." This L.A. is a place where random acts of generosity and goodwill improve the lives of the community. Any Small Goodness is a novel filled with hope, love, and warmth.

The Boy Who Saved Baseball by John H. Ritter

Tom Gallagher is in a tight spot. The fate of the Dillontown team rests on the outcome of one baseball game, winner take all. If Tom's team loses, they lose their field too. But how can they possibly win? Just when everything seems hopeless, a mysterious boy named Cruz de la Cruz rides into town and claims to know the secret of hitting. Not to mention the secrets of Dante Del Gato, Dillontown's greatest hitter ever. Since he walked away from the game years ago, Del Gato hasn't spoken a word to anyone. But now he might be Tom's only hope for saving his hometown.

The City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau

The city of Ember was built as a last refuge for the human race. Two hundred years later, the great lamps that light the city are beginning to flicker. When Lina finds part of an ancient message, she's sure it holds a secret that will save the city. She and her friend Doon must decipher the message before the lights go out on Ember forever

The Conch Bearer by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Action, adventure and magic combine in this compelling quest fantasy that whisks readers to a far away land and to a reading experience they won't soon forget. The Conch Bearer is a feast for the senses with a multitude of colors, smells, sounds, and textures. It's a feast of the emotions as readers feel fear, hope, joy, trepidation, sadness, and wonder -- right along with the main characters. And it's a feast for adventure-lovers - a fast paced story that races across contemporary India to a dramatic climax in the Himalayas. The story opens in a poor section of Kolkata, where 12-year-old Anand is entrusted with a conch shell imbued with mystical powers. Anand's

task is to return the shell to its rightful home high in the mountains. Will he succeed? Accompanied by a mysterious stranger and a resourceful street urchin, Anand will encounter good and evil - both in himself and in those around him.

Darby by Jonathan Fuqua

Darby Carmichael thinks her best friend is probably the smartest person she knows, even though, as Mama says, Evette's school uses worn-out books and crumbly chalk. Whenever they can, Darby and Evette shoot off into the woods beyond the farm to play at being fancy ladies and schoolteachers. One thing Darby has never dreamed of being - not until Evette suggests it - is a newspaper girl who writes down the truth for all to read. In no time, and with more than a little assistance from Evette, Darby and her column in the Bennettsville Times are famous in town and beyond. But is Marlboro County, South Carolina, circa 1926, ready for the racial firestorm its youngest reporter unintentionally creates?

Eragon by Christopher Paolini

When Eragon finds a polished blue stone in the forest, he thinks it is the lucky discovery of a poor farm boy; perhaps it will buy his family meat for the winter. But when the stone brings a dragon hatchling, Eragon realizes he has stumbled upon a legacy nearly as old as the Empire itself. Overnight his simple life is shattered, and he is thrust into a perilous new world of destiny, magic, and power. With only an ancient sword and the advice of an old storyteller for guidance, Eragon and the fledgling dragon must navigate the dangerous terrain and dark enemies of an Empire ruled by a king whose evil knows no bounds. Can Eragon take up the mantle of the legendary Dragon Riders? The fate of the Empire may rest in his hands....

Granny Torrelli Makes Soup by Sharon Creech

Twelve-year-old Rosie and her best friend, Bailey, don't always get along, that's true. But Granny Torrelli seems to know just how to make things right again with her warm words and family recipes. She understands from experience that life's twists and turns can't rattle the unique bond between two lifelong pals. Newbery Medal winner Sharon Creech cooks up a delightfully tender novel, filled with homemade dishes and secret recipes. It's easy to remember what's important about love, life, and friendship while Granny Torrelli makes soup.

Jackie's Wild Seattle by Will Hobbs

How do you rescue a coyote trapped in the elevator of a Seattle office building? How do you save an injured seal at the bottom of a cliff with the tide coming in? Fourteen-year-old Shannon Young, visiting from New Jersey, is about to find out. Shannon and her little brother, Cody, are in for a summer of breathless, sometimes reckless, often hilarious adventure visiting their Uncle Neal, who drives an ambulance for a wildlife rescue center called JACKIE'S WILD SEATTLE. When Uncle Neal is injured by a red-tailed hawk, Shannon summons her courage and starts rescuing the animals herself. Jackie, the director of the center, believes in "the circle of healing," and helps troubled young people by letting them work with the animals. Shannon becomes interested in Tyler, an appealing but withdrawn teenager who is fascinated by a bear cub and an

injured eagle. Uncle Neal warns her that Tyler is a ticking time bomb, but Shannon discovers her uncle is keeping secrets of his own. Cody, meanwhile, is having nightmares about the events of September 11, and is sure some new disaster is about to strike. Everything is uncertain, and home is so very far away.

Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson

Maia, an orphan, is sent from England to live with unfamiliar cousins on a rubber plantation in South America. The brave, curious girl and her fierce but kind governess arrive in their new home, each with secret hopes of adventure. These are immediately quashed by the Carters, who hate their adopted land and its inhabitants. They are obsessed with re-creating England in the forest, right down to the watery puddings. It is only through friendship with a mysterious Indian boy (who just might be the heir to a large fortune) and a runaway child actor (who specializes in Little Lord Fauntleroy) that Maia and Miss Minton, her governess, find the excitement they longed for: an unexpected expedition into the heart of the Amazon, in search of a lost tribe and the legendary giant sloth.

The Last Treasure by Janet S. Anderson

Thirteen-year-old Ellsworth Smith belongs to a family of two—it's just him and his dad, always on the move. This is okay with Ellsworth until the dreams come, the dreams of houses surrounding a beautiful green square. Then a letter arrives, inviting Ellsworth to a home he doesn't remember. He is needed there because the square is real, and hidden within it is a treasure that only a child can uncover—the last treasure of John Matthew Smith, the family's eccentric patriarch. But there are other things hidden in the square, too-old sorrows and pain. Ellsworth's return stirs up these "ghosts," and finding the treasure may be the only way to give them rest.

The Other Side of Truth by Beverley Naidoo

After the murder of their mother, twelve-year-old Sade and her younger brother are smuggled out of Nigeria by their journalist father to escape the corrupt military government and growing violence. They are sent to their uncle in London, but when they arrive, he is missing and they are abandoned, passed between foster homes. Their father escapes to England to find them—but he will be sent back to Nigeria unless Sade can find a way to tell the world what happened to her family.

The Ravenmaster's Secret by Elvira Woodruff

Eleven-year-old Forrest lives at the Tower of London prison, where his father tends the Tower ravens and guards inmates. Forrest's only friends are his pet raven, his father's prisoners (who all end up dead), and Ned, the young rat catcher. Soon Forrest's father gets a new prisoner: Maddie, the beautiful daughter of a Scottish spy. Immediately Forrest and Maddie become friends. But when she is slated for execution, Forrest must make some painful choices: Should he commit treason to help her escape, or obey the law and let his innocent friend be hung?

The River Between Us by Richard Peck

Set during the first year of the Civil War, the whole country is changing—even the folks from a muddy little Illinois settlement on the banks of the Mississippi. Here, fifteen-year-old Tilly Pruitt frets over the fact that her brother is dreaming of being a soldier and that her sister is prone to supernatural visions. A boy named Curry could possibly become a distraction. Then a steamboat whistle splits the air. The Rob Roy from New Orleans docks at the landing, and off the boat step two remarkable figures: a vibrant, commanding young lady in a rustling hoop skirt and a darker, silent woman in a plain cloak, with a bandanna wrapped around her head. Who are these two fascinating strangers? And is the darker woman a slave, standing now on the free soil of Illinois? When Tilly's mother invites the women to board at her house, the whole world shifts for the Pruitts and for their visitors as well.

Sahara Special by Esme Raji Codell

Sahara Jones is going into fifth grade—again. Although she won't be "Sahara Special" anymore (special needs, that is), she doesn't expect this year to be any better than last year. Fifth grade is going to be different, though, because Sahara's class is getting a new teacher. With her eggplant-colored lipstick and strange subjects such as "Puzzling" and "Time Travel," Miss Pointy is like no other teacher Sahara has ever known. With her help, Sahara just might find a way to redefine special for herself.

A Single Shard by Linda Sue Park

Tree-ear, an orphan, lives under a bridge in Ch'ulp'o, a potters' village famed for delicate celadon ware. He has become fascinated with the potter's craft; he wants nothing more than to watch master potter Min at work, and he dreams of making a pot of his own someday. When Min takes Tree-ear on as his helper, Tree-ear is elated—until he finds obstacles in his path: the backbreaking labor of digging and hauling clay, Min's irascible temper, and his own ignorance. But Tree-ear is determined to prove himself—even if it means taking a long, solitary journey on foot to present Min's work in the hope of a royal commission . . . even if it means arriving at the royal court with nothing to show but a single celadon shard.

A Strong Right Arm by Michelle Y. Green

She looks the batter in the eye. Sizes him up for a curve- or fastball. Stretches her 5' 2" frame. And pops a surefire, windup, coming-right-at-ya pitch smack dab over the plate. One that lets the batter know that this "peanut of a girl" means business. Fueled by her passion for the game and buoyed by the inspiration of Jackie Robinson, Mamie Johnson is determined to be a professional baseball pitcher. From the time she insists on trying out for the all-male all-white Police Athletic League team until she becomes one of only three women to play in the Negro Leagues, Mamie Johnson's life shows that courage -- and a fierce curveball -- can make a childhood dream come true.

Tadpole by Ruth White

It's the beginning of summer 1955, and though her family is struggling financially, Carolina's mama still indulges her four daughters' whims, like springing for all of them to get permanents. Each of her older sisters seems to have cut out a niche for herself, but

Carolina Collins is still trying to find her own special place in life. The girls' hardship is softened by the sudden appearance of their favorite cousin, Tadpole, a charismatic thirteen-year-old with a knack for guitar playing. Tad sees in Carolina a spirit and talent that no one has noticed before, and he predicts that she "is gonna surprise everybody one of these days." The Collinses soon learn the real reason for Tad's visit, however, and the weeks that follow are filled with dread that his abusive guardian will come and take him away. But Tad is not the sort of boy to succumb to a bully, and he and Carolina both have surprises in store for everyone.

The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo

Welcome to the story of Despereaux Tilling, a mouse who is in love with music, stories, and a princess named Pea. It is also the story of a rat called Roscuro, who lives in the darkness and covets a world filled with light. And it is the story of Miggery Sow, a slow-witted serving girl who harbors a simple, impossible wish. These three characters are about to embark on a journey that will lead them down into a horrible dungeon, up into a glittering castle, and, ultimately, into each other's lives. And what happens then? As Kate DiCamillo would say: Reader, it is your destiny to find out.

The Young Man and the Sea by Rodman Philbrick

Skiff Beaman has a boatload of problems. Ever since his mother died, his father doesn't want to get up off the TV couch -- even when the Mary Rose, his fishing boat, sinks at the dock. Twelve-year-old Skiff's been bailing out Rose by himself for months, getting up before dawn to pump out the bilge and keep her floating -- just in case his dad decides to put his beer aside and get up and go fishing. But once a boat has gone under you can't bail it out. With a nod to Hemingway, award-winning novelist Rodman Philbrick presents a starkly dramatic yet poignant story about a determined boy who refuses to give up, despite overwhelming odds. Skiff Beaman makes a choice to take on the world -- but can he possibly beat the odds and win?