

Taking a tote on the CBC Book Awards

InCite decided to gather some opinions on the CBC shortlisted titles in each of the three categories before the awards were announced. Collected were Miranda Harrowell, Children's Librarian for Ryde Municipal Libraries, Ann Hazell, SA Department of Education, Julie Taylor, Librarian-in-Charge of Children's Services, Bankstown City Library, Tony Hawkins, Reader's Bookshop for Young People, and Robin Sheehan, Librarian, Toowoomba Municipal Library and reviewer for the local newspaper, *The Chronicle*.

Gallop home

Two clear 'favourites' emerged in the titles nominated for the 'Picture Book of the Year' and 'Book of the Year: Older Readers' categories. In the 'Book of the Year: Younger Readers' section *Pigs Might Fly* was singled out by nearly all the group as a clear winner. Feelings ranged on this category as a whole from the feeling there was not much to choose from to excitement over the number titles shortlisted. As well as commending *Pigs Might Fly* Robin Sheehan also liked *Farmer Schulz's Duck*, while Tony Hawkins thought Michael Dugan's *Melissa's Ghost* could prove to be a 'dark horse'. Ann Hazell described the irreverent *Sister Madge's Book of Nuns* as 'tremendous fun'. This title has certainly caused a stir!

Ripping yarns

Titles shortlisted for the 'Book of the Year: Older Readers' have certainly provided a 'good read'. Hardly surprising with such literary players amongst the field as Ruth Park, Victor Kelleher and Simon French. Newcomers to the scene like Gillian Rubinstein with *Space Demons* and Donna Sharp with *Blue Days* have also stimulated interest.

Space Demons has received a great deal of praise. Miranda Harrowell feels that it is pitched at just the right level and is a story boys will feel 'comfortable' with. The story is about a group of children who are transported

into a computer game program. *Blue Days* received mixed comments. Many thought the theme of an adolescent coping with death was handled well. Ann Hazell congratulated Queensland University Press for producing an Australian young adult series.

Taronga by Victor Kelleher and *My Sister Sif* by Ruth Park were praised for their literary craftsmanship. Ann Hazell thought that *Taronga* would win as it dealt with the challenging topic of nuclear holocaust, a topic most teenagers are concerned with. Some of the group thought *Taronga* is not as exciting as Kelleher's earlier work, *Master of the Grove*. Some of the group felt that *My Sister Sif* was too didactic and heavy, while others said that it had received favourable response from some children who had particularly enjoyed the fantasy elements of the story. Most of the group felt that it would be very difficult for Ruth Park to top the success of *Playing Beattie Bow*.

Tony Hawkins felt that *Riverman* would win because it was a good story and because Allan Baillie had come so close to winning before. For me this is the only book in the shortlist which I couldn't put down. The story completely transported me in time and place. The masterful writing style and the emotion which came through had me hooked.

A photo finish?

In the picture book area most of the group felt that it would be a controversial decision if *The Nativity* illustrated by Julie Vivas won. Many felt that they would like to see this one win but thought it unlikely. *Animalia* was a hot favourite for some as it had sold very well. The densely packed jewel-like illustrations attracted praise and so did the witty commentary. Julie Taylor commented on the dynamic illustration by Margaret Power in *Creatures in the Beard* and Ann Hazell felt that this was one of those picture books that would be around for a long time. One of the group felt that the robin and the field mouse must have migrated a long way to nest in an Australian beard! *Kojuro and the Bears* by Junko Morimoto received praise for its stunning book design and the 'other wordliness' of the illustrations. Definitely for older readers the story follows the fortunes of a Japanese bear hunter. Text and pictures flow together enhancing each other in an extraordinary way.

Keep in mind that many reviewers are supplied with the names of the winning titles before the awards are announced. They, like InCite readers looking at this article, have the luxury of hindsight.

	Miranda Harrowell	Ann Hazell	Julie Taylor	Tony Hawkins	Robin Sheehan	Kathy Huselbee
BOOK OF THE YEAR: OLDER READERS						
Taronga	*	•			•	
Space Demons	•	*				*
My Sister Sif				*		
All We Know					*	
Riverman				•		•
Blue Days			•			
PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR						
Animalia			•	•	*	
The Wild						
Kojuro and the Bears		•				•
Creatures in the Beard			*			
The Nativity	•				•	*
Murgatroyd's Garden						

• First choice * Second choice

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