



Marion Vannett Ridgway Award

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2016 RIDGWAY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Creators of four picture books honored for outstanding debut work

The Ridgway Award celebrates outstanding work by first-time children's book illustrators or authors. Established in 1993, this unique award honors the memory of artist's representative Marion Vannett Ridgway, who focused her energy on talented newcomers. The Ridgway Award is given with the spirit of encouragement for those just entering the world of children's book publishing and it applauds the very best debut picture book illustration and text.

Over twenty United States children's book publishers participated in this year's contest, and more than 60 debut works, all published in 2015, were considered. The judging panel included Zolotow Honor Award-winning author Susan Marie Swanson, Coretta Scott King Honor Medalist R. Gregory Christie, NYT Best Illustrated Book winner Antoinette Portis, Curator of the University of Minnesota's Children's Literature Research Collection Lisa Von Drasek, as well as previous Ridgway Award winners Jessica Young and Brendan Wenzel.

The in-depth judging process took place through a weeklong, online discussion forum, where panelists expressed and reflected on opinions, returning often to a rich conversation concerning selected books' merits. Three rounds of voting, accompanied by evolving ideas about text and illustration quality, brought judges to their winning decision.

The Winners of the 2016 Marion Vannett Ridgway Award

First Prize: Author and Illustrator Sangmi Ko for *A Dog Wearing Shoes* (Schwartz & Wade Books, Random House, 2015). Quirky, accomplished pencil sketches, bright touches of color, matter-of-fact dialog, and pitch-perfect-pacing pull this title out of the "worthy lesson book" pile and place it squarely into the "outstanding debut" position. Cartoonish without being cute, Ko explores the gamut of big feelings associated with pets in pictures and words. This little girl-finds-dog story feels real and satisfying, and the pencil work, in all its variations, absolutely fresh.

Honor Awards:

Authors Troy Andrews and Bill Taylor for *Trombone Shorty* (Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2015). Striking a conversational tone, with an easy flow marked by lively punctuated interjections of “Where y’at?”—the book’s authors make Trombone Shorty’s memories immediate, painting a warm picture of his childhood, his community, and the New Orleans’ music scene. Few picture books talk *about* childhood *to* children in such a direct way, and Bryan Colliers’ accomplished collages amplify a text that is vigorous, tender, a bit edgy, and informative all at once.

Illustrator Ekua Holmes for *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer* (Candlewick Press, 2015). Layered, stylized, almost quilt-like collages tell this important story in snapshots. With touches of bare feet and yellow southern sun-dresses, Holmes captures the southern experience, while her artworks’ rich, warm colors, dramatic compositions, and repeated floral motifs interact fluidly with Carole Boston Weatherford’s poems, evoking the hardship of Hamer’s experience, as well as her humanity.

Illustrator Juana Medina for *Smick!* (Viking, Penguin Books for Young Readers, 2015). Every page of *Smick!* sustains a kind of joy. Medina masterfully captures doggy exuberance in her loosely scrawled thick black lines, and the contrast of her drawing with collage elements like a stick or a flower petal bird creates a delightful visual surprise. Doreen Cronin’s rhyming text provides a terrific match for such energetic art.

For more information, visit the Ridgway Award website: www.marionvannettridgwayaward.com
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