

NCTE Award for Excellence In Poetry for Children

Charge: *To recommend every two years a living American poet or anthologist to receive the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children in recognition of his or her aggregate work.*

To establish an annual list of Notable Poetry Books published in the current year by any poet, living or deceased, and of any nationality.

To establish an annual list of Notable Verse Novels published in the current year by any poet, living or deceased, and of any nationality.

To sustain a collection of poetry books of past and future award winners in the University of Minnesota, Kerlan Collection.

To recognize and foster excellence in children's poetry by encouraging its publication.

To explore ways to acquaint teachers and children with poetry through such means as publications, programs, and displays.

For more information on the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry, please go to:
<http://www2.ncte.org/awards/excellence-in-poetry-for-children-living-american-poet/>.

Major activities: What major actions, projects, initiatives, or studies in your charge have been completed by your group since July 1, 2016? In each activity describe the more important features of the work, and connect your work to the NCTE Vision Statement, if applicable.

1. What actions, projects, initiatives, or studies are “in progress” at this time?

- Our biggest project at this time is reading, reviewing and rating the poetry books we have received from publishers. As chair, I wrote to over 100 publishers asking them to submit their current poetry titles published in this current year, 2017. Once we rate the books, we select our top picks for the current list of Notable Poetry Books and Notable Verse Novels. We use a shared Google Spreadsheet to rate and comment on the books. We have had 102 books submitted as of this date and more fall releases are expected. November 1st is the deadline for accepting 2017 titles. We will use our committee session time on Thursday, Nov. 16 from 1:00 to 5:00 to discuss our final selections with voting to conclude by December 1st.
- We are also planning our Conference presentations. We have two this year in St. Louis.
- Our Notables session on Friday is entitled, “Today, Tomorrow and Forever – Introducing the 2017 NCTE Poetry and Verse Novel Notables” and on Sunday we will introduce our 2017 Poet, Marilyn Nelson in a session entitled, “ How Marilyn Nelson Helped Us Discover Poetry.” Both of these sessions will have a Powerpoint presentation with handouts and poetry “warm ups” that will provide teachers in the audience with ideas for using poetry in the classroom.
- In addition, we will be introducing Marilyn Nelson at the Children’s Literature Award Luncheon on Saturday where she will give a short acceptance speech. I have been working with her publisher representative, Venessa Carson, to make these arrangements.
- We wrote and submitted articles on the Notables list for *School Library Journal* and *The New England Journal of Reading*. In addition, two of our committee members interviewed the new recipient of the Award for Excellence in Poetry, Marilyn Nelson, for an article that will appear in the November issue of *Language Arts*.

2. What have you accomplished so far, and what is your timeline for future work?

- This year was a little different for the Poetry Committee in that we restructured a bit from previous years. Based on a discussion we were able to have at our work session at NCTE Atlanta last year, we decided to update several aspects of the committee work. First, the rotation of committee members will be two members rotating off every year rather than 3 new members each year. This

provides a better transition from year to year and allow previous years' members to offer insight from past selection procedures.

- We also requested longer meeting time at annual conference. We found we did not have enough discussion time to critically discuss books for both the Poetry Notables and the Verse Novel Notables. This has been accommodated this year and we will have a 1:00 to 5:00 time frame on Thursday, November 16th.
- We also defined the criteria for selecting the Notables and added the Verse Novel category.
- Though the Verse Novels were recognized in previous years, they have never been an actual Notable list as recognized by NCTE. We worked with NCTE Exec to get this criteria in place and also suggested updates to the website to reflect these changes. The timeline for the final selection of Notable titles will be December 1st, final voting to take place after our discussions at annual conference.
- Every other year, an outstanding Poet of Excellence is selected. We completed and announced that at annual conference last year in Atlanta. Marilyn Nelson was the recipient for 2017. The next selection of the Poet of Excellence will be part of next year's committee responsibility to be announced at annual conference 2018 in Houston.
- At the request of NCTE, we rewrote the language for the nomination of poetry books for the current Notable year to be more in line with the other NCTE sponsored book awards. We have a few unique situations since poetry books are a genre unto themselves so our nomination procedure differs slightly from, for example, the Charlotte Huck Award.

3. How has the work of your group contributed to NCTE's role in shaping the profession of teaching and/or the understanding of literacy in educational contexts?

- Poetry is a genre that not all teachers are comfortable teaching or promoting in the classroom. The goal of our committee is to do just that – promote good poetry and provide teaching ideas through our conference presentations and also various journal publications, like *Language Arts*, *School Library Journal*, and *The New England Journal of Reading* to name of few. Through our presentations and publications, we can share not only what we consider the best poetry available from the current publishing year but also offer suggestions to teachers to make them more comfortable in teaching and sharing poetry in the classroom and encourage not only the writing of poetry on the part of students but to enjoy listening to poetic language.

Because one of our goals is to seek out poetry from diverse languages and cultures, we hope to promote the multicultural and diverse language and setting that poetry offers. This speaks directly to the opening sentence of the NCTE Vision Statement: "NCTE and its members will apply the power of language and literacy to actively pursue justice and equity for all students and the educators who serve them."

Karen Hildebrand, Chair