

EVALUATING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Organization

- How is the information organized?
- Does it follow a logical sequence – enumeration or chronological?

Writing Style

- Does the writer use clear and dynamic prose?
- Does the text read well aloud? Is it engaging and easy to listen to?
- Is the vocabulary appropriate for the intended audience?
- Is the sentence length appropriate for the intended audience?
- Is the point of view (first person, omniscient, objective or third person) consistent and effective?
- Are literary devices effectively used—connotations, imagery, figurative language, hyperbole, allusion, diction, and tone?
- Is inclusive language used?

Plot

- What kind of narrative order does the story follow -- chronological, flashbacks, or told from the view of different characters? Is it clear and easy to follow?
- What type of plot structure is used-- episodic, progressive, or parallel? Is it appropriate for the intended audience?
- How is conflict resolved? Is the resolution credible?

Characters

- Are the characters realistic and believable?
- Are the primary and secondary characters developed?
- Do the secondary characters serve a purpose?

Illustrations

- Do the illustrations provide information by complementing, supporting or extending the text?
- How do the illustrations relate to the text?
- Do the illustrations enhance the text?
- Do the illustrations make the book more appealing?
- Are the illustrations up-to-date?

OVER →

- How well do the illustrations complement the story?
- Do the illustrations give a sense of place and culture?
- Does the style of the artist blend well with the tone of the story?
- Are there added details that expand characterizations or define setting?
- Does the artist add a personal interpretation to the story through the use of mood or symbols?
- Is the medium (drawings, paintings, collage, photography, etc.) effective in expressing the action or emotion of the story?
- When not dictated by the subject matter, are illustrations inclusive of boys and girls as well as different races and cultures?
- Is there an overall sense of unity or harmony in the illustrations?

Design

- Is the typography (type size and font) appropriate for the intended audience?
- Are the illustrations placed effectively and logically?
- Do the pages seem to turn in the right places?
- Is the book assembled well? Are quality materials used?

Authority & Sources

- Who is the author? Who is the publisher?
- What sort of authority does the author have on the subject matter?
- Is there documentation of the sources consulted by the author?
- Are the sources up-to-date and scholarly?
- Are endnotes used to provide supplemental information?

Source: Horning, Kathleen T. *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997.

BASIC CRITERIA FOR THE SYDNEY TAYLOR AWARD:

1. The book has literary and artistic merit. Illustrations, format and overall design are very important.
2. The book has positive Jewish focus and content.
3. The book is appropriate for the intended age level of readers in style, vocabulary, content, format, and illustration.
4. Whether fiction or non-fiction, the book is accurate, well researched, and based on reputable scholarship.
5. The book is not a textbook or a reprint.