

Carter G. Woodson Book Awards, 2011



The Carter G. Woodson Book Award was created in 1974 to promote cultural literacy in children and young adults. The idea emerged from the NCSS Committee on Racism and Social Justice in honor of African American scholar Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Dr. Woodson earned his Ph.D. in history from Harvard in 1912, one of the first African Americans to do so, and dedicated his life to promoting the study of African American history in schools and increasing the availability of related literary resources. He established “Negro History Week” in 1926, a forerunner of the present day “Black History Month,” and is often described as the “father of black history.”

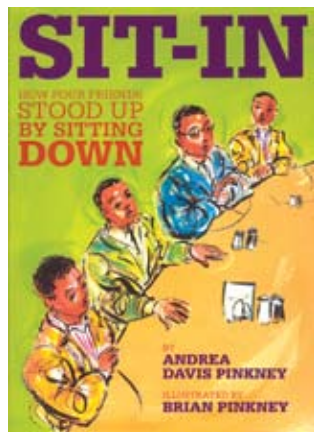
The book award, which identifies authors, illustrators, and publishers of exceptional books that advance understanding of ethnicity in the United States, is presented annually.

NCSS and the Carter G. Woodson Award Committee are pleased to present reviews of the elementary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) level books for 2011. These award and honor books are examples of exceptional books that focus on individual or collective experiences of ethnic minorities in the United States. The reviews provide a synopsis of each book and include relevant NCSS thematic strands.

Elementary Winner

Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down, by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney. Little, Brown and Company, a Division of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Reviewed by Dean Cristol, associate professor at The Ohio State University and chair of the 2011 Carter G. Woodson Awards Committee.



Andrea Davis Pinkney created a captivating book based on the February 1, 1960, sit-in by four college students who wanted to be served “A doughnut and coffee, with cream on the side” at the segregated Greensboro, North Carolina, Woolworth’s lunch counter. The reaction and subsequent events related to this simple request allows young readers to grasp the depth of injustice during this difficult period in American history. The beautifully illustrated pages by Brian Pinkney offer a sense of what it may have been like to be part of one

of America’s greatest social movements. The book includes an informative civil rights timeline and an author’s note on what happened following the lunch counter protest. The book’s website www.hachettebookgroup.com/features/sitin/index.html displays photos and artifacts that offer further insight into this historic period as well as an educator’s guide.

● TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE; ● INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS; ● POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE; ● CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES.

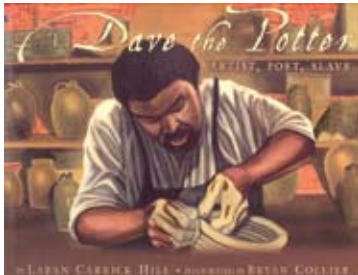
Elementary Honor

Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave, by Laban Carrick Hill, illustrated by Bryan Collier. Little, Brown and Company, a Division of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Reviewed by Michele Horne, third grade teacher, Rosewood Elementary International School, Rock Hill School District 3, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

This book introduces the reader to Dave, an artist, poet, and potter, who was a slave in the 1800s in South Carolina. Dave created large pots, varying in size from 25–40 gallons in capacity. As if the sheer size and number of pots he created were not enough to warrant interest in him as an artist, the fact that he inscribed poetry on many of his pots is what makes his story truly remarkable. Slaves were not supposed to be taught to read or write during this time, so the fact that Dave was not only literate, but an able poet,

has generated much interest. He wrote on his pots and signed them during a point in history when he would have risked death for doing so. In fact, during a period following a slave uprising near where Dave lived, his pots suddenly bear no inscriptions, indicating that he knew the great risks.



Laban Carrick Hill's sparse text seems appropriately reflective of what is documented about Dave. As a slave, Dave was not a man about whom voluminous narratives were kept. As such, his own verses are, perhaps, the clearest glimpses into his character; therefore, Hill tells Dave's story in verse as well. As a teaching tool, the book touches students and makes them eager to learn more about this person, inspiring a wealth of conversation, questioning, and research opportunities.

● CULTURE; ● TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE; ● INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY; ● POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE.

Secondary Winner

An Unspeakable Crime: The Prosecution and Persecution of Leo Frank, by Elaine Marie Alphin. Carolrhoda Books, a Division of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc.

Reviewed by Dee Storey, professor of teacher education at Saginaw Valley State University, Saginaw, Michigan.

What happened in Atlanta, Georgia, in the spring of 1913 would unleash the mighty powers of public opinion, yellow journalism, and political subterfuge. On April 26, 13-year-old Mary Phagan went to the National Pencil Company to collect her wages. Instead of joining her family at a Confederate Memorial Day

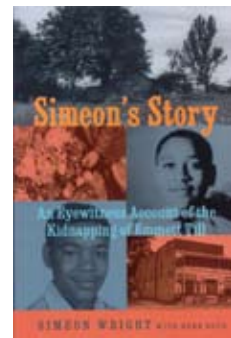


celebration later, she was found murdered in the factory. The murder of Mary, a Caucasian, and the subsequent lynching of a Jewish man, led to the founding of the Anti-Defamation League and a reawakening of the Ku Klux Klan. An African American watchman found Mary's body, and was the initial suspect. But police soon made the building superintendent, Leo Frank, their prime suspect. Frank, a college-educated Jewish man from the North, was arrested, tried, and found guilty; while in prison custody, he was lynched by an angry white mob. Alphin alerts readers to the premise that Frank was always innocent, although public sentiment, at the time, thought otherwise. Actual photographs and other documentation point to symbols of the time that help readers develop a framework for what happened and possibly why. This book is unusual in that it shows anti-Semitism working in conjunction with continued ill will toward Yankees who were still viewed as interloping carpetbaggers. Alphin is successful in causing readers to pause and think about how institutional discrimination was viewed as a valid form of "keeping the law." The author's notes will be of particular interest.

● CULTURE; ● TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE; ● INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS; AND ● CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES.

Secondary Honor

Simeon's Story: An Eyewitness Account of the Kidnapping of Emmett Till, by Simeon Wright with Herb Boyd. Lawrence Hill Books, an imprint of Chicago Review Press.



Reviewed by Marilyn J. Ward, professor in the Department of Education at Carthage College, in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

This account of 14-year-old Emmett Till's kidnapping and subsequent murder, in 1955, while visiting relatives in Mississippi is told by his cousin, Simeon Wright. Wright was there when Emmett whistled at a white female store clerk and the next morning when two white men forcefully dragged Emmett from the Wright's home. Several days later, his body, beaten beyond recognition, was found in the Tallahatchie River. This terrible crime became a catalyst for the civil rights movement.

Wright confronts the distortions, misinformation, and misconceptions surrounding the event, providing additional details and keen observation about the case. He also sets the scene as to what life was like for blacks in the Jim Crow South. Wright focuses on the crime with clarity and strong emotion, helping readers to understand Emmett's story and its place in the modern civil rights movement. He further explains the efforts to open the case in 2005 and the passing of the 2008 Emmett Till Unresolved Civil Rights Crime Act, which allows unresolved civil rights murders before 1970 to be reinvestigated.

This well-written memoir offers advice to aspiring writers, journalists, and future lawyers. "If you want an accurate account of any story, go to the primary sources. They know what really happened."

● CULTURE; ● TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE; ● INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS; AND ● CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES. 🌐