

Newbery Metrics

The Newbery and the Illustrators

STEVEN HERB

Erratum

We regret the omission of Grace Lin from the “Double Dipping” list on page 24. Grace is also a member of this exceptional group of author-illustrators who have garnered both Newbery and Caldecott recognition. She received a 2010 Newbery Honor for *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* and a 2019 Caldecott Honor for *A Big Mooncake for Little Star*. Congratulations, Grace!

I began reading Newbery Medal and Honor Books in elementary school, so I have been aware of the award for nearly three quarters of the life of children’s literature’s most famous prize. *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes (1944)¹ was an early favorite of mine, probably because of the Boston setting and Johnny’s painful adventure with molten silver.

My discovery of baseball statistics, and especially the use of SABRmetrics² (or Sabermetrics, for spelling convenience) began when I became a serious fantasy baseball practitioner twenty-five years ago—someone who “owns” an imaginary baseball team made up of real players from the major league teams each year.³ A fantasy team combines the actual batting and/or pitching statistics of the real players drafted or acquired by an owner, and then is ranked against other league owners’ daily, weekly, or monthly statistics. Sabermetrics, this fascinating (and quite nerdy!) empirical analysis of baseball adds an extra layer of excitement I have not experienced with numbers since I decided not to major in mathematics in college after all. Three of my favorite statistical measures are *on-base percentage (OBP)*,⁴ *slugging percentage (SLG)*,⁵ and *wins above replacement (WAR)*.⁶

This article is my tribute to two of my lifelong passions: reading and baseball, in metric syncopation.⁷

Newbery Honor Stats

Number of Honor Books Per Decade

The numbers of Newbery Honor titles vary from year to year, ranging from no titles (three times in the 1920s) to eight titles (twice in the 1930s), and everywhere in between, except seven.⁸

The 326 Total Newbery Honors, By Decade

27 honors in the 20s	28 honors in the 80s
50 honors in the 30s	26 honors in the 90s
41 honors in the 40s	34 honors in the 00s
40 honors in the 50s	30 honors in the 10s
26 honors in the 60s	326 total Newbery Honors ⁹
24 honors in the 70s	



Steven Herb worked in support of the literature choices and literacy rights of children for over 45 years in classrooms, public libraries, and academic libraries. He served as 1996–97 ALSC President and followed that honorable assignment with three years of service as chair of ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee. He also served on the 2006 Newbery Award Committee.

Editor’s Note: Steven Herb was excited to contribute to this special issue; sadly, he passed away in December 2021 before publication.

Number of Honor Books Per Year

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|---|---|
| 0. 1923, 1924, 1927 | 4. 1936, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1949, 1951, 1958, 1959, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2020 |
| 1. 1926, 1965, 1974, 1979, 1980, 1991, 1999 | 5. 1922, 1939, 1947, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1957, 1972, 1983, 2003, 2021 |
| 2. 1925, 1928, 1943, 1955, 1963, 1964, 1969, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1992, 1995, 2002, 2004, 2012, 2015, 2019 | 6. 1929, 1930, 1932, 1937 |
| 3. 1933, 1935, 1938, 1956, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018 | 7. None |
| | 8. 1931, 1934 |

Longest repeated sequence—Between 1940 and 1946, only 1943 didn't produce four Honor titles.

Longest gap between a repeated number—It was 39 years between two single Honor Book years (1926 to 1965).

Longest wait for a repeated number, and counting—It has been 94 years since the last 0 Honor Books year.

Average Honor Books per year—3.26

Three Newbery Metrics

Multiple Appearances on the Newbery Medal/Newbery Honor List

Nine writers have had their work recognized four times among Newbery Medals and Honors. They are:

- **Jeanette Eaton**—*A Daughter of the Seine: The Life of Madame Roland* (1930 Honor); *Leader by Destiny: George Washington, Man and Patriot* (1939 Honor); *Lone Journey* (1945 Honor); and *Gandhi, Fighter Without a Sword* (1951 Honor).
- **Eleanor Estes**—*The Middle Moffat* (1943 Honor); *Rufus M.* (1944 Honor); *The Hundred Dresses* (1945 Honor); and *Ginger Pye* (1952 Newbery Medal).
- **Genevieve Foster**—*George Washington's World* (1942 Honor); *Abraham Lincoln's World* (1945 Honor); *George Washington* (1950 Honor); and *Birthdays of Freedom, Book One* (1953 Honor).
- **Russell Freedman**—*Lincoln: A Photobiography* (1988 Newbery Medal); *The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane* (1992 Honor); *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* (1994 Honor); and *The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (2005 Honor).
- **Elizabeth Janet Gray**—*Meggy MacIntosh* (1931 Honor); *Young Walter Scott* (1936 Honor); *Penn* (1939 Honor); and *Adam of the Road* (1943 Newbery Medal).
- **Virginia Hamilton**—*The Planet of Junior Brown* (1972 Honor); *M.C. Higgins, the Great* (1975 Newbery Medal);
- **Cornelia Meigs**—*The Windy Hill* (1922 Honor); *Clearing Weather* (1929 Honor); *Swift Rivers* (1933 Honor); and *Invincible Louisa: The Story of the Author of "Little Women,"* (1934 Newbery Medal).
- **Scott O'Dell**—*Island of the Blue Dolphins* (1961 Newbery Medal); *The King's Fifth* (1967 Honor); *The Black Pearl* (1968 Honor); and *Sing Down the Moon* (1971 Honor).
- **Jacqueline Woodson**—*Show Way* (2006 Honor); *Feathers* (2008 Honor); *After Tupac and D. Foster* (2009 Honor); and *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2015 Honor).

Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush (1983 Honor); *In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World* (1989 Honor).

Two writers have had five books recognized. They are:

- **Meindert DeJong**—*Hurry Home, Candy* (1954 Honor); *Shadrach* (1954 Honor); *The Wheel on the School* (1955 Newbery Medal); *The House of Sixty Fathers* (1957 Honor); and *Along Came a Dog* (1959 Honor).
- **Laura Ingalls Wilder**—*On the Banks of Plum Creek* (1938 Honor); *By the Shores of Silver Lake* (1940 Honor); *The Long Winter* (1941 Honor); *Little Town on the Prairie* (1942 Honor); and *These Happy Golden Years* (1944 Honor).

Double Dipping: Newbery/Caldecott Combos

A small group of artists have appeared in both award camps for years. It is extraordinary to be able to illustrate a children's book at a level that receives the Caldecott Medal or Honor, but to also write at a level that receives the Newbery Medal or Honor seems nearly impossible. The rules have changed over time, so the earliest Newbery winners faced some restrictions in repeating that accomplishment. Also, until 1977, a particular book had to be considered for one award or the other, but not both.

In the entire history of the two awards since the Caldecott joined the Newbery in 1938, there are only fifteen children's book creators (one couple) found on both complete lists.

- **Laura Adams Armer** received the Newbery Medal for *Waterless Mountain* in 1932; and a Caldecott Honor for *The Forest Pool* in 1939.
- **Ludwig Bemelmans** received a Newbery Honor for *The Golden Basket* in 1937; the Caldecott Medal for *Madeline's Rescue* in 1954; and a Caldecott Honor for *Madeline* in 1940.
- **Mary and Conrad Buff** received three Newbery Honors, for *Big Tree* in 1947, *The Apple and the Arrow* in 1952, and *Magic Maize* in 1954; and a Caldecott Honor for *Dash and Dart* in 1943.
- **James Daugherty** received the Newbery Medal for *Daniel Boone* in 1940; and two Caldecott Honors, for *Andy and the Lion* in 1939 and *Gillespie and the Guards* (Benjamin Elkin) in 1957.
- **Marguerite de Angeli** received the Newbery Medal for *The Door in the Wall* in 1950; a Newbery Honor for *Black Fox of Lorne* in 1957; and two Caldecott Honors, for *Yonie Wondernose* in 1945 and for *Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes* in 1955.
- **Tomie dePaola** received a Newbery Honor for *26 Fairmount Avenue* in 2000; and a Caldecott Honor for *Strega Nona* in 1976.
- **Wanda Gág** received two Newbery Honors, for *Millions of Cats* in 1929 and for *ABC Bunny* in 1934; and two Caldecott Honors, for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1939 and for *Nothing at All* in 1942.
- **Kevin Henkes** received two Newbery Honors, for *Olive's Ocean* in 2004 and *The Year of Billy Miller* in 2014; the Caldecott Medal for *Kitten's First Full Moon* in 2005; and two Caldecott Honors, for *Owen* in 1994 and for *Waiting* in 2016.
- **Holling C. Holling** received two Newbery Honors, for *Seabird* in 1949 and for *Minn of the Mississippi* in 1952; and a Caldecott Honor for *Paddle-to-the-Sea* in 1942.
- **Dorothy P. Lathrop** received a Newbery Honor for *The Fairy Circus* in 1932; and the first Caldecott Medal, for *Animals of the Bible* (Helen Dean Fish) in 1938.
- **Robert Lawson** received the Newbery Medal for *Rabbit Hill* in 1945; a Newbery Honor for *The Great Wheel* in 1958; the Caldecott Medal for *They Were Strong and Good* in 1941; and two Caldecott Honors, for *Four and Twenty Blackbirds: Nursery Rhymes of Yesterday Recalled for Children of To-Day* (Helen Dean Fish) in 1938 and for *Wee Gillis* (Munro Leaf) in 1939. Lawson is the only person to have won both the Newbery and Caldecott Medals.
- **Arnold Lobel** received a Newbery Honor for *Frog and Toad Together* in 1973; the Caldecott Medal for *Fables* in 1981; and two Caldecott Honors, for *Frog and Toad Are Friends* in 1971 and for *Hildilid's Night* (Cheli Durán Ryan) in 1972.
- **William Pène du Bois** received the Newbery Medal for *The Twenty-One Balloons* in 1948; and two Caldecott Honors, for *Bear Party* in 1952 and for *Lion* in 1957.
- **Kate Seredy** received the Newbery Medal for *The White Stag* in 1938; two Newbery Honors, for *The Good Master* in 1936 and for *The Singing Tree* in 1940; and a Caldecott Honor for *The Christmas Anna Angel* (Ruth Sawyer) in 1945.
- **William Steig** received two Newbery Honors, for *Abel's Island* in 1977 and for *Doctor DeSoto* in 1983; the Caldecott Medal for *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* in 1970; and a Caldecott Honor for *The Amazing Bone* in 1977.

Henkes is the only living member of this outstanding group. He says, "The names on this list are among those I came to know and admire when I was a teenager studying children's books and dreaming of becoming a published author and illustrator. I'm thrilled and honored to be included in their company."[†]

Congratulations to Kevin and that remarkable collection of talented people, and here's to expanding the list of all Newbery recipients for the next 100 years.[†]

* Kevin Henkes, Letter, October 26, 2021.

† I also hope that the next Newbery Century will offer additional metrics—three I wish for are a country and state-by-state birth distribution. I loved the US President list from World Book when I was young even if James Buchanan was a disappointment as our sole representative from Pennsylvania, my home state. Also, how about the jury members—who and where from? And, textual analytics?

Ages of Newbery Winners

- Average age of Newbery Medal winners over the first Newbery Century—47.99.¹⁰
- **Oldest Newbery winner**—Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, 71, for *Miss Hickory* in 1947.
- **Youngest Newbery winner**—For 82 years, Elizabeth Enright held that distinction for receiving the Newbery Medal for *Thimble Summer* (1939) at 31 until Tae Keller won the Newbery Medal in 2021 for *When You Trap a Tiger* at 27.
- Charles Boardman Hawes, author of *The Dark Frigate*, won the third Medal in 1924, and he is the only Newbery Medal winner to die before the announcement and the ceremony, at age 34. His widow, Dorothea Cable Hawes accepted the award.
- Despite Hawes' sadly premature death, apparently, Newbery Medal winners exceeded life expectancy for the United States, males and females, 59 percent of the time. That includes seventeen who lived into their nineties.¹¹ They are Sid Fleischman (90), Scott O'Dell (91), Betsy Byars (91), Jean Craighead George (92), Jean Lee Latham (93), Elizabeth Coatsworth (93), Paula Fox (93), Irene Hunt (94), Walter D. Edmonds (94), Harold Keith (94), Marguerite Henry (95), Elizabeth Yates (95), Elizabeth Janet Gray (97), Elizabeth Borton de Treviño (97), Marguerite de Angeli (98), Ann Nolan Clark (99), and Beverly Cleary (104!).



Pictured in this 1964 photo are, from left, Emily Neville, winner of the Newbery Medal; Maurice Sendak, winner of the Caldecott Medal; and Ruth Gagliardo, President of the Children's Services Division. Standing left to right: Helen Sattley, chair of the Newbery-Caldecott Awards Committee and Ursula Nordstrom, juvenile editor of Harper & Row, publisher of both the winning books.

in 1954, *House of Sixty Fathers* (Meindert DeJong) in 1957, *Along Came a Dog* (Meindert DeJong) in 1959, *Animal Family* (Randall Jarrell) in 1966, *Zlateh the Goat* (Isaac Bashevis Singer) in 1967, and the Newbery Medal to *The Wheel on the School* (Meindert DeJong) in 1955. That total of fifteen award books between the Caldecott and Newbery categories makes Maurice Sendak the book award champion.

Did You Ever Wonder about Newbery Illustrators, e.g., Who Worked on the Most Titles?

Apparently, I have.

There are three seven-time illustrators and their authors whose books have graced the lists during this Newbery century. To be asked that often to work with top writers is quite a tribute, but to be part of seven books to win the Newbery Medal or an Honor citation—extraordinary!

- **Maurice Sendak.** His Caldecott Medal for *Where the Wild Things Are* in 1964 is on many best Caldecott (and best picture book) lists since its publication nearly 60 years ago. In addition, he was the first American illustrator to win the Hans Christian Andersen Award for children's book illustration and the first recipient of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. He illustrated more than 150 books, with seven receiving Caldecott Honors; another seven won the Newbery Medal or Newbery Honor citation for their respective authors. The Newbery Honors went to *Hurry Home, Candy* (Meindert DeJong) in 1954, *Shadrach* (Meindert DeJong)
- **Kate Seredy** was born in Hungary and moved to the United States at age 23. She briefly owned a children's bookstore which helped her connect with children and to understand the expanding world of children's books. Always thinking of herself as an illustrator first, writer second, Kate did something in 1936 no one had ever done before nor has done since—she illustrated the Newbery Medal book *Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol Ryrie Brink; wrote and illustrated *The Good Master* which received a Newbery Honor; and illustrated the cover and endpapers for *Young Walter Scott* by Elizabeth Janet Gray, also an Honor Book—the first time someone had a hand in three books receiving the Newbery Medal and Honors in the same year. Kate's other four illustrated books (to bring her to seven) are an Honor Book in 1937 for *Winterbound* by Margery Blanco and an Honor Book in 1947 for *The Wonderful Year* by Nancy Barnes. Kate Seredy also received an Honor Book citation in 1940 for *The Singing Tree*, written and illustrated by Seredy; and the Newbery Medal in 1938 for *The White Stag*, also written and illustrated by Seredy.
- **Lynd Ward** was said to have noticed in first grade that

his name spelled backwards was “draw,” and took that as career advice. He also illustrated seven Newbery Medal or Honor Books from 1930 to 1944. The first four of these he did while also producing his well-known wordless graphic novels, starting with *Gods’ Man* in 1929, published the week the stock market crashed in October. Astoundingly, it went through six printings in four years and sold over twenty thousand copies. Throughout the 1930s Ward created five additional wordless novels leading many to credit Ward as the father of the graphic novel of today. His work with children’s book authors included an Honor Book for *Little Blacknose* by Hildegard Hoyt Swift in 1930; *Spice and the Devil’s Cave* by Agnes Danforth Hewes in 1931; *Bright Island* by Mabel L. Robinson in 1938; *Runner of the Mountain Tops* by Mabel L. Robinson in 1940; and *Fog Magic* by Julia L. Sauer in 1944.

Like Sendak and Sereby, Ward also illustrated more than one Newbery Medal or Honor Book in the same year. In Ward’s case, he did it twice. In addition to *Spice and the Devil’s Cave* in 1931, Ward also illustrated the Newbery Medal winner—*The Cat Who Went to Heaven* by Elizabeth Coatsworth. He did it once more in 1944—sharing *Fog Magic* with the Newbery Medal Winner—*Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes. &

References

1. All years associated with book titles in this article will be the Newbery or Caldecott year, rather than the copyright year, so the actual copyright year may be gleaned by simply subtracting one.
2. SABR comes from the Society for American Baseball Research, founded in (the actual) 1971.
3. I must acknowledge the inspiration of seven major league baseball heroes of my childhood and teen years—Henry Aaron, Roberto Clemente, Bob Gibson, Micky Mantle, Willie Mays, Frank Robinson, and Carl Yastrzemski. Great players all, and also statistical legends who helped start me on the sabermetrics path. I chipped my front tooth biting my thumb nail watching Clemente play in the 1971 World Series, but dropped any blame before the game even ended.
4. In baseball statistics, on-base percentage (OBP) is the percentage of plate appearances where a batter reaches base for any reason other than an error or a fielder’s choice.
5. Slugging percentage represents the total number of bases a player records per at-bat. Unlike on-base percentage, slugging percentage deals only with hits and does not include walks and hit-by-pitches in its equation. Slugging percentage differs from batting average in that all hits are not valued equally.
6. WAR measures a player’s value in all facets of the game by deciphering how many more wins he’s worth than a replacement-level player at his same position.
7. My Newbery metric choices focus on things one can’t find in any list, anywhere, without some time and arithmetic—and ignores the easy-to-find facts. For example, can

Extraordinary Feats in a Single Year

- In 1954—Meindert DeJong, with his illustrator of choice, Maurice Sendak, won two Honor Book citations, for *Shadrach* and *Hurry Home, Candy*.
- In 1968—E.L. Konigsburg arrived with two titles guaranteed to kill opponents at charades (unless they were children’s librarians), winning the Newbery Medal with *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and an Honor Book citation for *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth*.
- In 2021—Christina Soontornvat received two Newbery Honor citations for *All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys’ Soccer Team* and for *A Wish in the Dark*—the former is non-fiction and the latter fiction, another milestone for the Newbery.

- you find the list of the six two-time Newbery winners? Try it—see, not so hard. Kate DiCamillo for *The Tale of Despereaux* in 2004 and *Flora and Ulysses* in 2014; E. L. Konigsburg for *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* in 1968 and *The View from Saturday* in 1997; Joseph Krumpal for . . . *And Now Miguel* in 1954 and *Onion John* in 1960; Lois Lowry for *Number the Stars* in 1990 and *The Giver* in 1994; Katherine Paterson for *A Bridge to Terabithia* in 1978 and *Jacob Have I Loved* in 1981; and Elizabeth George Speare for *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* in 1959 and *The Bronze Bow* in 1962.
8. This article was completed in November 2021 at the conclusion of the year that the one-hundredth Newbery Medal was named, along with five Honor Books. Since the Newbery moves on to 101 in 2022, many metrics will change, but these numbers may be considered a snapshot of the Newbery at 100.
 9. All decade-by-decade data are organized and presented from one to ten (for example 1961 to 1970), as decimal data are typically presented. The only exception is that 2021 is presented with the 1922 to 1930 numbers to allow for ten relatively equal decades.
 10. Since the announcement and awarding dates shifted during the 100 years of Newbery, a uniform date was selected to represent the annual awarding, mostly for the determination of winners’ ages. To accentuate the celebration of books written in the United States, July 4 was selected.
 11. Sixty-four Newbery Medal winners have passed away and thirty-six were alive as of November 2021.