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January 24, 2023

Michelle Edwards Wins Charlotte Zolotow Award for

Me and the Boss: A Story about Mending and Love

Madison, WI – *Me and the Boss: A Story about Mending and Love*, written by Michelle Edwards and illustrated by April Harrison, is the winner of the 2023 Charlotte Zolotow Award for outstanding writing in a picture book. The award is given by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), a library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. *Me and the Boss* was edited by Anne Schwartz and published in the United States in 2022 by Anne Schwartz Books, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House. Three honor books and ten highly commended titles were also named.

A sibling relationship between Lee and his big sister, Zora (“the boss”), is at the heart of a tender, captivating story buoyed by singular details and skillful rendering of the young narrator’s childlike voice. When the adult running a library sewing program is reluctant to give Lee a sharp needle for the session’s project, Zora insists her brother is eight and old enough. (“Am not. Not even seven yet. I sit tall.”) Lee struggles with his stitches but later masters them during a wakeful night. Remembering to stitch slowly, he transforms a half-moon into a full moon, complete with a smile. Inspired, he keeps going, first sewing up the hole in his pants pocket, and later surprising Zora by fixing the torn ear on Bess, her bear. “She wraps me and Bess in her special hug, and we share something that is bigger than my pocket, bigger than Bess’s ear, maybe even bigger than me or Zora.” Marvelous pacing further distinguishes the superb storytelling.

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The three 2023 Zolotow Award Honor Books are:

- *My Brother Is Away*, written by Sara Greenwood, illustrated by Luisa Uribe, edited by Lee Wade, and published by Random House Studio, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House, 2022, shares the range of feelings a young girl has about her older brother's incarceration. She's uncertain, she's angry, but mostly she's sad about the absence of a loving sibling from her daily life. The quiet story stays solidly grounded in a child's perspective, revealing the girl's honest emotions rather than details of why her brother is in prison, and offering reassurance as well as opportunities for empathy and understanding.
- *On My Papa's Shoulders*, written and illustrated by Niki Daly, edited by Janetta Otter-Barry, and published by Catalyst Press, 2022, shines a light on loving family relationships during a boy's daily walks to school, which predictably vary depending on whether Mama, Gogo, Tata, or Papa is accompanying him. The mix of shorter and longer sentences and phrasing creates a wonderful narrative pace that is judiciously adjusted across the story to subtly mirror qualities of each walk.
- *Rodney Was a Tortoise*, written by Nan Fowler, illustrated by Yong Ling Kang, edited by Elizabeth Kribs, and published by Tundra Books, 2022, details Bernadette's delight in her beloved tortoise, Rodney, and her deep pain when he dies and she recedes into a metaphorical protective shell. Bernadette's happiness and grief both are conveyed through distinctive details in a narrative that adeptly balances a hard topic with moments of laugh-out-loud humor.

The ten 2023 Zolotow Award Highly Commended titles are:

- *Herbert on the Slide*, written and illustrated by Rilla Alexander (Hippo Park / Astra, 2022).
- *Juna and Appa*, written by Jane Park and illustrated by Felicia Hoshino (Lee & Low, 2022).
- *Little Houses*, written by Kevin Henkes and illustrated by Laura Dronzek (Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2022).
- *Mama's Home*, written by Shay Youngblood and illustrated by Lo Harris (Make Me a World / Random House Children's Books, 2022).
- *Mina*, written and illustrated by Matthew Forsythe (A Paula Wiseman Book / Simon & Schuster, 2022).
- *One Boy Watching*, written and illustrated by Grant Snider (Chronicle, 2022).
- *Powwow Day*, written by Traci Sorell and illustrated by Madelyn Goodnight (Charlesbridge, 2022).
- *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, written by Mac Barnett and illustrated by Jon Klassen (Orchard / Scholastic, 2022).
- *The Tide Pool Waits*, written by Candace Fleming and illustrated by Amy Hevron (Neal Porter Books / Holiday House, 2022).
- *When the Wind Came*, written by Jan Andrews and illustrated by Dorothy Leung (Kids Can Press, 2022).

Established in 1998, the Charlotte Zolotow Award honors the work of Charlotte Zolotow, a distinguished children's book editor for 38 years with Harper Junior Books, and author of more than 70 picture books, including such classic works as *Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present* (Harper, 1962) and *William's Doll* (Harper, 1972). Ms. Zolotow attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison on a writing scholarship from 1933 to 1936, where she studied with Professor Helen C. White. Ms. Zolotow died in November, 2013, at the age of 98.

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The annual award is given for outstanding writing in a picture book for children in the birth-through-seven age range published in the United States or Canada. This is the twenty-fifth time the award has been given. The 2023 award will be presented at an award ceremony in Madison at a date to be determined.

Members of the 2023 Zolotow Award committee were: Merri Lindgren, chair (Librarian, Cooperative Children's Book Center, Madison, Wisconsin); Maegan Heindel (Library Services Coordinator, Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, Wisconsin); Brooke Newberry (Youth Services Manager, La Crosse Public Library, La Crosse, Wisconsin); Madeline Oleson (First Grade Teacher, Kennedy Elementary School, Madison, Wisconsin); and Cigdem Unal (Director, Office of Campus Child Care and Family Resources, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin).

The Cooperative Children's Book Center is a noncirculating library for adults with a professional, career or academic interest in children's and young adult literature. The Friends of the CCBC, Inc., cosponsor of the award event, is a nonprofit organization offering lectures, book sales and other benefits for members, in addition to supporting the work of the Cooperative Children's Book Center.

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<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/charlotte-zolotow-award/>