

NLLN Scholarship Report  
Connie Jones  
American Library Association National Conference  
July 10-14, 2009

The ALA Annual Conference in Chicago offered many outstanding authors, illustrators, books, and exhibits. In addition to the stimulating programming, I had time to explore the Exhibit Hall and collected many posters to use in our Curriculum Center, in the Children's Literature class I will teach this year, and to share with Young Adult literature students. Many publishers provided free Advanced Reader's Copies of book titles which I will share with students and faculty members.

At the Margaret A. Edwards Award breakfast, Laurie Halse Anderson was given the 2009 award for significant and lasting contributions to literature for young adults. Laurie talked of her interest in writing for young adults, who have little control over what happens to them, but have "lots of control" over how they react. She spoke of the books for which the award was presented (*Fever 1793*, *Catalyst*, and *Speak*). I am anxious to share the information and the audio book of *WinterGirls* with our Young Adult Literature class at Concordia College this fall.

The format of the Coffee Klatch is one I'd love to see used at Spotlight on Books with our local and regional authors. Registrants were seated at tables with 1 spot reserved at each table for the author. Authors rotated from table to table, spending 5 minutes talking about their books, web sites, signings, etc. This "speed-dating method" allowed us to get lots of quick introductions to many authors and their books. Authors that we visited with included Sarah Dessen, Kimberly Pauley, author of *Sucks to Be Me: The All-True Confessions of Mina Hamilton, Teen Vampire (maybe)*, Yasmin Shiraz, author of *Retaliation* and also producer of the forthcoming documentary *Can She Be Saved?* about teen girl violence. The William C. Morris Award, given to a previously unpublished author for an outstanding 1<sup>st</sup> book was announced at the Coffee Klatch. Elizabeth C. Bunce wrote

*A Curse Dark as Gold*, a retelling of Rumpelstiltskin, set in the Industrial Age - another title I can't wait to read.

While it is hard for me to determine a highlight of the conference, the Newbery/Caldecott/Wilder Banquet is high on the list. Neil Gaiman, author of the Newbery winner *The Graveyard Book* told of spending his school holidays as a "feral child" in the public library, reading indiscriminately. *The Graveyard Book* "simmered" inside him for over 20 years before being written. Although I know that Gaiman's speaking fees will now be quite high, I would love to add him to our list of possibilities for Spotlight on Books.

Caldecott Medal winner Beth Krommes outlined her work for *The House in the Night*, explaining where her inspiration came from, as well as her technique. The acceptance speeches will again be printed in the July Horn Book magazine, but each of us attending the Banquet received a CD with the speeches. I plan to introduce my Children's Literature students to these award winners through the audio speeches, which provide such an added dimension to the speeches.

Ashley Bryan was awarded the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award which honors an author or illustrator whose work has made a lasting contribution to children's literature. Ashley sang and recited his speech for the audience, delighting us on the day before he celebrated his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards Breakfast was a celebratory event, honoring African-American authors and illustrators who create outstanding books for children and young adults. Kadir Nelson's *We Are the Ship* audiobook was given to each attendee, along with teaching guides. An announcement of new free Coretta Scott King teaching resources at the TeachingBooks.net web site was announced. Interviews and video clips with the authors and illustrators are now available to all interested teachers.

Another highlight of the conference was a session I stumbled onto. Authors Avi, Pam Munoz Ryan, Brian Selznick and Sarah Weeks used Readers' Theatre to give a

glimpse into some of their new books. Each of the authors displayed skills that not only entertained us, but that also made us want to rush right out to read the books mentioned. I've ordered each of the books they "read" about. I was unfamiliar with Sarah Weeks' *Oggie Cooder* books, which will offer fun new choices for middle grade readers, an area that I've tried to enhance.

Thank you to the Northern Lights Library Network for helping me to attend the ALA Annual Conference. The sessions I attended have given me much new material for my reading lists, for my Curriculum Center and for my classes. I feel inspired to use the new materials, to read the new books, and to share all that I learned at the conference.