



Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) and Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) Statement on Illinois' Readers' Choice Awards

Illinois' Readers' Choice Award lists created by AISLE (Monarch, Bluestem, Lincoln) and RCYRBA (Rebecca Caudill) provide student-centered and student-driven lists of exemplary children's and young adult literature. The awards' purpose is to encourage students to read widely for recreation and for information, to make decisions about their reading choices, and to find value in sharing their opinions about what they have read. These lists encourage students to revisit favorite authors, genres, and topics and to try new ones. These lists are important tools for teachers and librarians, whose charge is to encourage reading and promote excellent literature. These lists are resources for students, who—as individuals—select which books to read and how many to read. Students read more when they are free to choose what they want to read.

Each Readers' Choice list is created over several months and begins with teachers and librarians submitting student nominations from across the state. Students enthusiastically use these nominations to recommend and share favorite books with peers. Teen readers on the Lincoln Award Reading Panel review and discuss books alongside adult professionals, and teens get the final say in four of the 20 titles. Readers' Choice Award volunteer committee members are licensed teachers and certified school and public librarians from throughout the state who make decisions based on their own expertise and their consultation of professional reviews. These vetted lists include books that represent the experiences and reflect the interests of our state's diverse population of students. These vetted lists provide opportunities to expand readers' understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them.

AISLE and RCYRBA strongly believe in student voice and student choice. Students are the voters who select each year's winners. Students, as well as the nominated authors, illustrators, and publishers, value these children's literature awards because they are truly selected by the audience for whom they are written—the students.

AISLE and RCYRBA view Illinois school and public libraries' participation in Readers' Choice Award programs as a best practice, for these programs provide opportunities to encourage, amplify, and celebrate student voice and choice and to help students see themselves as future readers and leaders. Readers' Choice Award programs help schools and libraries celebrate reading and establish a reading culture within their community, which further supports student reading motivation and academic achievement.

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