

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Brad Hruska

Long Live The King!

The votes have been cast and the winner announced for the 2010 Caldecott Award. This prestigious recognition was named after the English illustrator Randolph Caldecott, who was one of the most influential artists during the nineteenth-century. Randolph’s illustrations were very unique for that time period because they created a sense of movement and action around the stories they accompanied.

The Caldecott Medal is presented annually by the “Association for Library Service to Children” to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book written the previous year. This year’s medalist is “The Lion & the Mouse” by Jerry Pinkney.

In this rendition of the classic Aesop’s fable, readers encounter a mouse trying desperately to escape the claws of a diligent “Screeeech” owl.

After fleeing for her life, the tiny creature finds herself clinging to the back of a noble lion, who appears to be sleeping; however, ever the clever predator, the king of the beasts snatches up the lowly morsel with one swipe of his mighty paw and an angry “Grrr.”

Sensing her fate once again in the balance, the tiny creature begins to “squeak” for her life and that of her young family should she be consumed.

The lion, amused with the pleas of this insignificant life form, decides to spare the mouse and allows her to return her family.

Shortly after the encounter, a group of trophy hunters “putt-putt” their way through the jungle and set a trap for the king of the beasts.

Unaware of the danger that lies before him, the lion walks right into the hidden hunters’ noose and is raised into the air.

After trying with all of his might to escape, the lion begins to “rrroaarrrrrr” for help. The mouse hears the king’s cry and makes her way to where the lion is being held captive.

Without a word and only the “scratch-scratch” of her sharp teeth, the mouse sets to work. After a few calculated chews, the lion falls to the ground, free from the net that once contained him.

Before scurrying away, the mouse takes a moment and explains to the lion that though she may be looked upon as small, the mouse has proven that she can be a significant help to an animal as large and powerful as the might king.

The lion, realizing his mistake, thanks the mouse for her kindness and quickly retreats back into the forest before the hunters are aware of what has just taken place.

“The Lion & the Mouse” by Jerry Pinkney is an excellent reminder to children that though they may not be as big or as old as some of the people around them, they still matter and can accomplish great feats. The tale also reiterates to readers of all ages that “no act of kindness, no matter how small, ever goes unnoticed.”

If you or your children are in the mood for a book with an appealing storyline, meaningful message, and amazing pictures, go on safari to the Columbus Public Library and capture the 2010 Caldecott Medal winner, “The Lion & the Mouse” by Jerry Pinkney. This wonderfully illustrated text is sure to be a grrrrreat read. If you would like a list of past Caldecott winners or are looking for other worthwhile summer read recommendations, please contact me at (402) 564-7116 ext. 4.