



Geisel Award Acceptance Speech

David LaRochelle and Mike Wohnoutka are the winners of the 2021 (Theodor Seuss) Geisel Award for See the Cat: Three Stories About a Dog (Candlewick). They delivered their acceptance remarks during the ALSC Awards Ceremony held Monday, June 28, 2021, on YouTube.

David LaRochelle: It was an incredible honor and a complete surprise when Mike Wohnoutka and I learned that our book, *See the Cat: Three Stories About a Dog*, had won the John Newbery Medal for outstanding writing. Winning the Newbery is a –

Mike Wohnoutka: David, we did NOT win the Newbery Medal.

David: Oh. What I meant to say was that I was *not* surprised when I learned that *See the Cat* had won the Randolph Caldecott Medal for outstanding illustration. Mike is such a talented artist that –

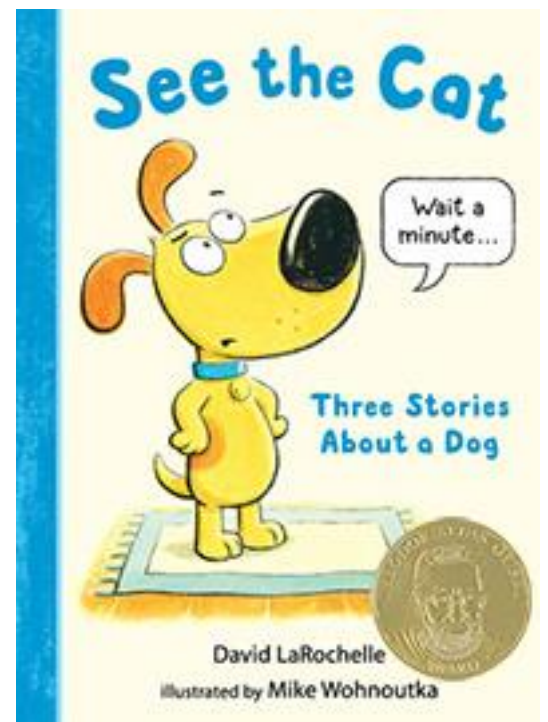
Mike: David, we did NOT win the Caldecott Medal!

David: As I was saying...both Mike and I are delighted that the award committee recognized the factual, science-based interactions between dogs and cats that we tried so hard to accurately portray in our book. Believe me, winning the Sibert Medal never even crossed my mind –

Mike: WE DID NOT WIN THE NEWBERY MEDAL!

WE DID NOT WIN THE CALDECOTT MEDAL!

WE DID NOT WIN THE SIBERT MEDAL!



David: Then why are we giving a speech???

Mike: Weren't you paying attention to that introduction we just received?

David: Uh, no. I was on my phone playing *Words with Friends* with Kate DiCamillo.

Mike: We won the Theodor Seuss Geisel Award.

David: The *what*?

Mike: The Geisel Award. The award for "the most distinguished book for beginning readers."

David: Wait a minute. You mean somebody *else* won those other awards, and we won an award for kids who are just *learning* to read?

Mike: Yes.

David: We won an award for creating a book for the *earliest* readers? A book that will open the door to reading, and that will give kids confidence so that someday they can read Newbery and Sibert books on their own?

Mike: Exactly.

David: So you're telling me that we created a book that will help kids fall in love with reading so that years from now they will still treasure books, and they'll share Caldecott winners with the young children in their lives? We won an award because our book does *all that*?

Mike: Well, at least seven people thought so.

David: In that case, with no offense to the other award winners, I can sincerely say that there is no other medal I would rather receive than the Theodor Seuss Geisel Award. As a former elementary school teacher, I am thrilled to think that a book I helped create might welcome independent readers to all the

wonders that await when you can read a book on your own. To the Geisel Award Committee, you've made me prouder than you will ever, ever know. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I'd also like to thank three other people. I'd like to thank Gary Nygaard, who has been my best friend even before my first book was published 33 years ago. Thank you, Gary, for all these years of encouragement, support, and love.

I'd like to thank everyone at Candlewick where we've been treated so wonderfully, but I'd especially like to thank our editor, Andrea Tompa. Andrea is smart and insightful and respectful and kind. I am so fortunate to be working with you, Andrea.

And the third person I'd like to thank should be obvious. The success of a picture book or beginning reader is dependent on the illustrations. Mike Wohnoutka is not only an outstanding illustrator, but he is one of my best friends. To be sharing this award with such a good friend makes this honor ten times greater. Mike, thank you for bringing my words to life with your lively, expressive, laugh-out-loud funny artwork. I hope we can create books together for many more years.

Mike: Thank you so much to the Geisel Committee and the ALSC for this award. This award means a great deal to David and me, as you could see from our crying faces in the Zoom meeting when we were told we had won.

My favorite books as a child were early readers. Admittedly, I didn't know they were "early readers" at the time. To me, they were just books - books I absolutely loved. I dedicated *See the Cat* to P.D. Eastman, Syd Hoff, and Richard Scarry. These are the authors and illustrators that instilled a love of books in me.

See the Cat is my 30th book and third collaboration with David. When he brought *See the Cat* into our critique group, I knew instantly that I wanted to be the illustrator. Fortunately, David agreed! So foremost I would like to thank David for believing that I could bring something to his already excellent stories. Also, I would like to thank him for his wonderful friendship. Yes, I hope we can create books together for many more years!

I would like to thank everyone at Candlewick, especially designer Lauren Pettapiece. You are ALL a joy to work with.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Anna, and my kids, Franklin and Olivia. Thank you for putting up with me and for all your love and support.

David: See the happy author.

Mike: And see the happy illustrator.

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2021 GEISEL HONOR BOOKS



The Bear in My Family

written and illustrated by Maya Tatsukawa
Dial Books for Young Readers



Ty's Travels: Zip, Zoom!

written by Kelly Starling Lyons; illus. by Nina Mata
HarperCollins Children's Books



What About Worms!?

written and illustrated by Ryan T. Higgins
Hyperion Books for Children



Where's Baby?

written and illustrated by Anne Hunter
Tundra Books, Penguin Random House