



# FACT SHEET

## Coretta Scott King Book Awards

In 2019, American Library Association (ALA) will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Coretta Scott King Book Award. Given annually, the awards serve as a guide for parents, librarians and caregivers, for the most outstanding books for youth by African American authors and illustrators that affirm African American culture and universal human values.

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards were established in 1969 by Glyndon Flynt Greer, a school librarian in Englewood, N.J., Mabel McKissack, a school librarian in New London, CT, and John Carroll, a book publisher. These three founders envisioned an award that would recognize the talents of outstanding African-American authors and encourage them to continue writing books for children and young adults. The award commemorates the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and honors his wife, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, for her courage and determination to continue the work for peace and world brotherhood.

Winners are selected by the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee and announced annually to a waiting national audience at the ALA Youth Awards Press Conference, held on the Monday of the ALA Midwinter Meeting. Award recipients are selected within three categories, including the Coretta Scott King (Author) Book Award, Coretta Scott King (Illustrator) Book Award and Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Award. The awards are sponsored by ALA Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) and supported by ALA's Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services (ODLOS).

The first Coretta Scott King Award was presented in 1970 at the New Jersey Library Association conference in Atlantic City, NJ. The award went to Lillie Patterson, author of "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Man, of Peace." In 1974, the committee honored an illustrator for the first time. The award went to George Ford for his illustrations in "Ray Charles" by Sharon Bell Mathis. Mathis also received the Coretta Scott King Author Award. That year, the Coretta Scott King seal was designed by Lev Mills, an internationally renowned artist in Atlanta to identify book jackets of award winners.

For nearly half a century, such outstanding African American authors and illustrators as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Walter Dean Myers, Virginia Hamilton, Jerry Pinkney and Christopher Paul Curtis have been honored by the ALA as Coretta Scott King Book Award recipients.

In 1979, on the 10th anniversary of the King awards, the Coretta Scott King Awards Task Force was formed and became a part of the ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table with Glyndon Greer as chair. Greer died in 1980, having seen the award succeed as one of ALA's most prestigious honors. In 1982, the Coretta Scott King Book Awards became an official award of the American Library Association.

Currently the Coretta Scott King Book Award Anniversary Committee is planning 50th anniversary celebration events to take place during 2019. Additional information regarding Coretta Scott King Book Award 50th Anniversary activities will be available within the coming weeks at [www.ala.org/csk](http://www.ala.org/csk).

Coretta Scott King Book Award merchandise is available through the ALA Store at <https://www.alastore.ala.org>.

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