Massachusetts Book Awards 2007 Winners

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By Pat Keogh

Recently the Massachusetts Center for the Book announced the winners of the Massachusetts Book Awards for 2007. This award is granted each year “to recognize significant achievements in Commonwealth fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children’s literature.” I had the great pleasure of being one of the judges in the Children’s Literature category. Chris Rose, teacher and bookseller at the Andover Bookstore, and Jennifer Whitehead, Head of Children’s Services at the Clapp Memorial Library in Belchertown were the other judges.

We read from late fall through mid-March and were delighted to honor: Incantation by Alice Hoffman as the winner. This first-person narrative told by 16-year-old Estrella provides a fascinating look at the life of secrecy shrouding the village of Encaleflora during the Spanish Inquisition. It is a riveting tale that readers won’t forget. The two honor books are Clementine by Sara Pennypacker and Counting on Grace by Elizabeth Winthrop. Clementine provides lots of laughs to early chapter book readers. This feisty character slides from one disaster to another in one week. Marla Frazee generously illustrates the spirited book. Grace, another unforgettable character, takes the reader into the North Pownal, Cotton Mill in 1910 Vermont. In a wrenching story of child labor readers feel the vibrations of the machines, the exhaustion of the worker, and the futility of factory life. Enter Lewis Hine, reformer with a camera. Excellent endnotes give further information and a bibliography.

To see the complete list of winners, check out http://www.massbook.org