

Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature

Announcement of the Sixteenth Annual Awards (for books published in 2002)

The annual prize of \$1,000 in the Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature is to be awarded to **Catherine Bateson** for *Painted Love Letters*, published by **University of Queensland Press**. The novel centres on the illness and death of young Chrissie Grainger's father. The family need to make a number of accommodations such as moving to the city for better medical treatment and resolving family relationships. While focusing mainly on Chrissie and her experiences during this time, Bateson very positively portrays Chrissie's grandmother. The tension between Chrissie's sadness, and her resentment of the impact of her father's impending death are dealt with well. The author weaves into the story ways in which Chrissie can remain linked with her father through art while still acknowledging his loss.

The \$1,000 Young Readers/Picture Book Award was not awarded this year. Of the small number of picture books and books for younger readers submitted for the award, few met the criteria. Of those that did, none were of a sufficiently high standard to merit the award.

Books Useful for Therapists

The following books tell stories which may enhance therapists' insight into specific problem areas. The Committee strongly recommends that therapists read these selections critically before deciding whether they are appropriate to share with particular clients. Because of the sensitive nature of some of these books it is important, if they are used, that they be only one tool within an ongoing therapeutic relationship — inclusion in this list does not mean a book is recommended as a self-help book.

Picture Books

Waiting for Mum by Helen Lunn, Anna Pignataro, Scholastic Press, Australia. A child externalises worry as she waits for her mother to pick her up from school. The text employs the narrative approach of externalisation and is complemented by appealing illustrations.

Books for Older Readers

Rain May and Captain Daniel by Catherine Bateson, University of Queensland Press. This book raises the complex issues that can be encountered in stepfamilies. It finds a way for the 'wicked' stepmother to engage with the stepchild through their common love of Star Trek and through supporting a sick friend.

The Garden of Empress Cassia by Gabrielle Wang, Penguin Australia (Puffin). A complex interplay of teacher, friends, family and cultural factors makes for an engaging story about a girl with a Chinese background who is bullied.

Njunjul the Sun by Meme McDonald & Boori Monty Pryor, Allen & Unwin. A story about a young Aboriginal boy who leaves the bush to avoid trouble and moves to the city to live with his uncle. The author describes the interplay between support from the Aboriginal uncle, his non-aboriginal aunt and the development of the boy's identity. The book was considered for the Award, but sexualised aspects of his relationship with an older woman caused the judges concern.

The Barrumbi Kids by Leonie Norrington, Scholastic Australia. A sensitively portrayed story about friendship of children from two cultures — Aboriginal and white.

Boy Overboard by Morris Gleitzman, Penguin Books (Puffin). Moving away from his usual humorous style, Gleitzman explores the traumas of children who become refugees and make the boat trip to Christmas Island. Their family story before making the boat trip is explored and gives a context to the rest of the narrative.

Painted Love Letters by Catherine Bateson, University of Queensland Press. See above. ©

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