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Children's Book Guild News



CHILDREN'S
BOOK GUILD
of WASHINGTON, DC

Monthly News

Authors • Illustrators • Children's Literature Specialists

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Friday, April 24, 2020

Pages

[Home](#)

[Guild Member Blogs](#)

[Busboys and Poets](#)

[Monthly Luncheon Schedule](#)

About Me



Monthly News

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC is a professional organization of authors, illustrators and children's literature specialists promoting high standards in children's literature since 1945. Visit us at <https://childrensbookguild.org/>

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May 2020

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK GUILD'S REVISED CALENDAR OF EVENTS



MAY AND JUNE DIGITAL MEETINGS ON ZOOM

The Children's Book Guild will hold digital meetings for members on Thursday, May 21, and Thursday, June 18. Both meetings will start at 7 p.m. ET. No advance registration is necessary. All members will receive email invitations with meeting ID and password

information. Whether you live in the DC area or are an out-of-town member, we'd love to see you there!

Here is a brief description of each meeting:

Thursday, May 21, 2020, 7 to 8:15 p.m. ET

Please join us to vote on nominees to run the Guild for 2020-2021, and on three proposed amendments to the organization's by-laws. The amendments are all intended to promote outreach, diversity and inclusiveness. This meeting will take the place of the Guild's canceled March business meeting. Email invitations for this meeting will include information about the proposed leadership team and amendments.

Thursday, June 18, 2020, 7 to 8:15 p.m. ET

We'll use this meeting to check in, share and learn from one another about how our work is going and what we think might change in the

world of literature for young readers during the coming year. Email invitations for this meeting will include information about featured speakers.

ALSO, PLEASE NOTE!

The Guild's Annual Nonfiction Award Event Has Been Postponed. Originally scheduled for Saturday, May, 30, 2020, at Clyde's of Gallery Place, the event will instead take place in spring 2021. We look forward to honoring author Catherine Reef for her remarkable works of nonfiction for young readers at an in-person celebration next spring. We hope to announce the new date sometime in the fall.

Rescheduled Speaker Series: Due to the pandemic, the Guild canceled its monthly lecture series programs for March, April and June 2020. The Guild hopes to reschedule speakers Debbie Levy, Ron Charles and Raul III for spring 2021.

IN THIS ISSUE:

1. Four Schools to Receive Youth Literacy Grants
2. Guild Members Offer Reading Recommendations
3. The PEN/Phyllis Naylor Grant Is Accepting Submissions
4. Member News
5. Branching Paths: Jane Harrington on Writing and Teaching

FOUR AREA SCHOOLS TO RECEIVE YOUTH LITERACY GRANTS

The Children's Book Guild is proud to announce this year's recipients of the Youth Literacy Grants:

C. W. Harris Elementary School
nominated by Kem Knapp Sawyer

Excel Academy
nominated by Laura Gehl

Payne Elementary School
nominated by Fred Bowen

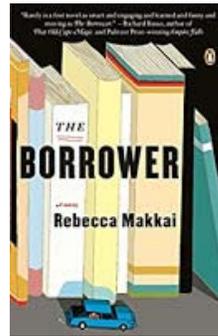
West Education Campus
nominated by Mary Amato

Each school will receive a \$500 grant to purchase books through the First Book Marketplace. Thank you to all the Guild members for making these grants possible.

Your suggestions are welcome. If you would like to nominate a school in the DC Metro area to receive a grant in 2020-2021, please email [childrensbookguild\[at\]yahoo.com](mailto:childrensbookguild@yahoo.com).

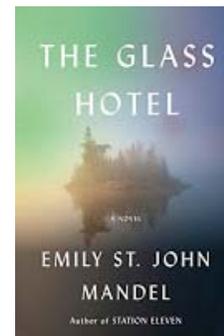
RECOMMENDED READING

Are you looking for a good book to read as an escape from distressing news, as a way to pass long hours at home, or simply because you love to read? Some Guild members offer suggestions.



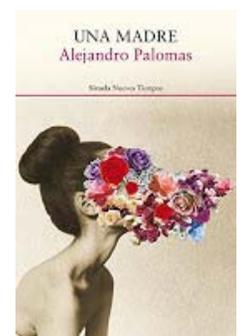
Paige Billin-Frye recently read *The Borrower*, by Rebecca Makkai, on the recommendation of a friend. "Actually I listened to it," Paige writes, "which is how I read many books these days, especially novels. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It's a story of a children's librarian in a small town in Missouri and her involvement in the life of a kid who's an avid reader. It's a quirky story with quirky characters (always a plus for me), an odd take on a buddy road-trip tale that at times demands a bit of willing suspension of disbelief. There are fun parodies and allusions to children's books we all know and love sprinkled throughout, leading me to

believe that the author herself must have a love of children's literature. Though an important plot element is the librarian's distrust of some practices of conservative Christianity, the author stops just short of wholesale condemnation, as an equally important plot element is her developing recognition of the gray areas in her own life as well as in that of her young companion. I do enjoy a book when I really can't see where the author is heading, and this one satisfied in that way right up until the end."



Debbie Levy just finished Emily St. John Mandel's *The Glass Hotel*. "I loved it," Debbie comments, "and I haven't loved many novels lately. I even loved the way it jumps around in time, something that some readers have said they found confusing; I enjoyed the opportunity to carefully follow the threads of multiple lives and events. It felt great to need to concentrate on something other than our current situation." Debbie adds, "One silver living of these stay-at-home days is that my son Ben Hoffman, who some Guild members got to know when he lived in DC and worked at First Book a couple of years ago, came with his partner to stay here in Maryland with us until their home, New York City, is less fraught. Ben works for Greenlight Bookstore in Brooklyn, managing their offsite events (which we hope will one day exist again), and he's a great resource for reading suggestions. His next recommendation for me is Colum McCann's *Transatlantic*. Naturally, I ordered it online from an independent bookstore."

Lulu Delacre has been reading a novel in Spanish: *Una madre*, by Alejandro Palomas. Lulu says the book is "so beautifully written that it makes me want to transcribe passages to learn how the author has strung words together to create such vivid images. The action occurs on New Year's Eve, in Barcelona. The characters' many hidden layers are revealed slowly, in stages, like the hours we count until midnight." Lulu sums up *Una madre* as "both poignant and hilarious at times."



Susan Stockdale recommends two recent novels and one twentieth-century American classic. Of the three, *Nothing to See Here*, by Kevin Wilson, is Susan's top pick. She writes: "I wondered if I could buy into a book with such a weird premise--10-year-old twins who spontaneously ignite--but I was enthralled by it. The author made the story not only believable, but also endearing. This is a quirky, wholly original novel offering magical realism and a ton of heart. Five stars!"



Susan calls *Ask Again, Yes*, by Mary Beth Keane, "a beautifully crafted suburban drama about two Irish-American families that are forever changed and linked by a tragic incident. It explores how unresolved childhood experiences of loss and trauma affect the next generation, among other hefty themes. Keane treats her complicated and flawed characters with such compassion and tenderness that, weeks after finishing the book, I'm still thinking about them. Their story is a brilliant exploration of struggle, loss and redemption."

The classic was *Black Boy*, by Richard Wright.

Susan found this memoir of Wright's impoverished childhood in the Jim Crow South and his eventual move to Chicago to be "a captivating but chilling reading experience. Wright recounts in a clear and clean writing style how brutally his family and others treated him and the desperate hunger he experienced every day. His inherent sense of dignity, self-worth and social justice helped him survive his childhood, but *storytelling*—the stories he both read and wrote—truly saved him. This is a story of hope in the face of unimaginable obstacles."



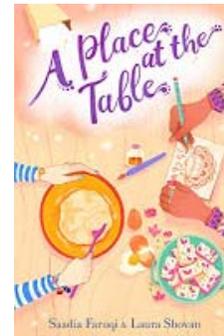
Among the advanced reading copies that Jacqueline Jules picked up at the most recent ALA Midwinter Meeting were two new novels by Guild members that offered her hours of enjoyment during this long stretch of Covid-19 isolation. Jackie sums up *Storm Dog*, by Laura Elliott, as "a touching coming-of-age story set during the Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester, VA." Jackie continues, "I loved the rich local flavor, and the way important social issues were gracefully interwoven throughout the story. Ariel, the young protagonist, is awakened not only to her own place in the world, but to her responsibilities as a citizen as well."

Kent State, by Deborah Wiles, recalls the fatal shooting on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University in Ohio. Says Jackie, "Told in riveting verse, this book vividly recreates the scene, the emotions and the period. It reminded me that watershed events can galvanize us and ultimately change us for the better."

Deborah Kalb has been reading a wide variety of books over the past difficult month or so, mostly for her book blog (<http://deborahkalbbooks.blogspot.com/>), for which she has interviewed many Guild members, and also for the book groups she is attending



virtually. "It's always hard to pick out a favorite, because there are so many I enjoy reading," Deborah says, "but I'll mention a novel for adults, *The Book of V*, by Anna Solomon, which will be published in May. It focuses on the story of Esther and the Jewish holiday of Purim, while also bringing the narrative into modern times. On the children's book front, one book I'll mention is *A Place at the Table*, a middle grade novel by Saadia Faruqi and Laura Shovan (to be published in August), which looks at the friendship between two middle school girls and also deals with racism and diversity issues."



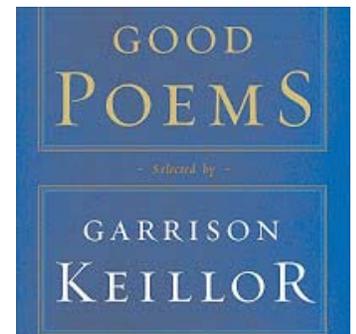
Some readers find that anxiety about the coronavirus has drained them of the concentration needed to read novels. They often are turning to shorter works, such as poems. Fred Bowen has not felt that need and is reading books on baseball's history to prepare himself for a planned writing project. But he has also been dipping into a collection of poems he culled from years of listening to "The Writer's Almanac," choosing just a few each night. Notes Fred, "I listened to the show especially during the years when my daughter, Kerry, was in high school. It was on the local NPR station (WAMU) as I was getting her out the door to catch the bus."

The show's host, Garrison Keillor, was accused of sexual impropriety in 2017, which caused public radio stations to drop the daily segment as well as his weekly program, *A Prairie Home Companion*. But Fred discovered that "The Writer's Almanac" is still being recorded and is available online

at <http://www.garrisonkeillor.com/radio-categories/twa-2018/>. Archived episodes can be accessed on the site as well. In

each, Keillor tells the audience what happened in the arts and culture on that date and ends by reading a poem. "It's a wonderfully civilized five minutes. You may want to try it out," Fred said.

"Keillor collected a lot of the show's poems in a series of three books (https://www.amazon.com/s?k=garrison+keillor+good+poems&i=stripbooks&crd=1YCX6578AHOA&srefix=garrison+kei%2Caps%2C131&ref=nb_sb_ss_i_5_12). I have all three, and they are fun to wander through. Most of the poems are pretty accessible, and some are even funny."



THE PEN/PHYLLIS NAYLOR GRANT FOR CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT NOVELISTS



The PEN/Phyllis Naylor Grant for Children's and Young Adult Novelists has been offered every year since 2000 to an author of children's or young adult fiction for a novel-in-progress. Previously called the PEN/Phyllis Naylor Working Writer Fellowship, the award was developed to help writers whose work is of high literary caliber and to assist a writer at a crucial moment in his or her career to complete a novel. The author of the winning

manuscript, selected blindly (that is, by judges unaware of nominees' names), will receive an award of \$5,000.

Phyllis established the PEN award because she wanted to see a "a children's book writer seated onstage at the ceremony along with authors such as Salman Rushdie, Gay Talese and Susan Cheever." PEN selects the judges, and Phyllis only knows the winner after he or she is chosen.

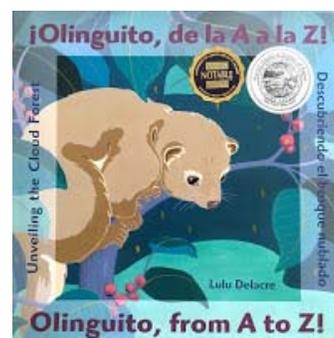
Eligibility:

- A candidate is a writer of children's or young adult fiction.
- A candidate must have published one or more novels for children or young adults that have been warmly received by literary critics but have not generated significant sales.
- The writer's previously published book(s) must be published by a US trade publisher. Self-published works are ineligible.
- The submitted work must be a novel-in-progress.
- Judges will be looking for candidates whose work has not yet attracted a broad readership.

(Please note: Graphic novels and picture books are not eligible for consideration.)

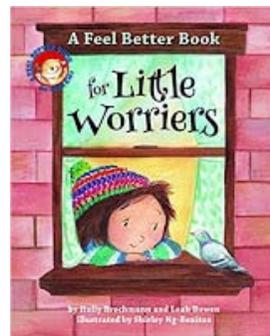
Eligible Guild members are encouraged to apply. Submissions are accepted from April 1 through August 1, 2020. You can find details here: <https://pen.org/pen-phyllis-naylor-grant/>.

MEMBER NEWS



LULU DELACRE responded to an SCBWI request for resources for stuck-at-home kids by creating a series of five videos, in English and Spanish, based on *Olinguito, from A to Z! ¡Olinguito, de la A a la Z!*. Her aim was to entice young minds to explore their own backyards after watching the series. Grouped by language, the videos can be found at [Olinguito, from A to Z! Unveiling the Cloud Forest • Series of 5 episodes](#) and [¡Olinguito, de la A a la Z! Descubriendo el bosque nublado • Serie de 5 episodios](#).

SALLY DAVIES's solo exhibition of paintings at Maryland Hall in Annapolis, titled "Vantage Point," was supposed to run from Feb 20 through May 23. Maryland Hall is now closed, and, of course, the artist's reception in March was cancelled. But just before closing the staff made a virtual tour of the exhibition. Here's the link to that gallery tour: <https://www.marylandhall.org/exhibitions/vantage-point-paintings-sally-davies>.



In the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak, stress and anxiety for both children and their caregivers may be running high. In response to this, the American Psychological Association and Magination Press started an initiative called Magination Press Story Time, a series of videos of authors reading their books. The videos not only help children manage their emotions during this time, but they provide entertainment and education for kids at home. Topics range from strategies for coping with worries and sadness, to mapping activities that teach spatial thinking, to introductions of big concepts such as kindness and gratitude. The series debuted with *A Feel Better Book for Little Worriers*, read by co-author Leah Bowen.

Story Time videos will be released twice weekly, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, at www.maginationpressfamily.org. In addition to the series, Magination Press will continue to publish content to help families process current events, such as [developing self-care skills](#) and [practicing mindfulness as a coping strategy](#).

BRANCHING PATHS...

AN OCCASIONAL SERIES ON HOW GUILD MEMBERS' WORK LEADS TO OPPORTUNITIES



WINDING BACK *by Jane Harrington*



I've recently returned to the Guild after some years of dormancy. Between 2000 and 2008 I wrote children's books, and during that time the Guild was a tremendous support—serious, caring writers and professionals who kept the ideas growing, nurturing the muse. I'll always credit my successes in children's publishing to the symbiosis I found right here. But at some point (no accident that it was when my daughters all fled the nest) I was drawn away from the genre and toward writing for adults. I got an MFA, began contributing to literary journals and anthologies, and branched out to academia. A few years ago, I took an adjunct post at Washington & Lee University, far from my roots in the DC area. Or so I thought at the time.

Perhaps this should have seemed a logical outgrowth, but I didn't expect what would happen: that my pedagogical repertoire would become entirely centered on children's literature. What started as one course on the fairy tale became a second on controversies in the publishing industry, and now I'm also teaching a creative writing workshop for students who want to try their own hands at crafting children's stories. Some of these courses were firsts for W & L (not an insignificant point, given that the school has been around since 1749), and all were firsts for me. So, naturally, I harked back to the Guild, its talents and generosities still a-flourish, I was delighted to discover.

I now regularly incorporate into my curricula ideas tapped from lunchtime lecturers, from social media posts, from old friends like Karen Leggett, Jacqueline Jules and Amy Hansen. Debbie Levy came to speak with my lit students a couple of years ago. (We had coffee with Ruth Bader Ginsburg during that visit; true story!) And now Erica Perl is going to work with my creative writers online this spring, which I know will go a long way toward keeping students engaged—and me sane—during this isolating era

of coronavirus. I'm on a schedule myself to be a guest lecturer this summer for graduate students in Hollins University's MA/MFA programs in children's literature.

All wonderful twists and turns. And I'm even dabbling at writing for children again. I have a granddaughter now, and she *loves* books.



Jane's granddaughter is delving into the classics.

(tree-branch image above from clipart.email)

DO YOU HAVE A BOOK BEING RELEASED THIS SPRING?

During this challenging spring, authors and illustrators with books scheduled for release are seeing launches, talks and signings canceled. If you are in this group, Deborah Kalb invites you to be interviewed for her popular blog, "Book Q & As with Deborah Kalb": <http://deborahkalbbooks.blogspot.com/>. Please contact Deborah through her website: <http://www.deborahkalb.com/>.

Virtual Programs at Politics and Prose

During the pandemic, Politics and Prose continues to host free book events for children and adults—virtually. These can be viewed in real time or after, as recordings. Deborah Wiles spoke about her new historical novel in verse, *Kent State*, on April 21. On April 28 at 7 p.m., Mary Quattlebaum will be in conversation with award-winning author J. Albert (Jennifer) Mann about Mann's new historical YA novel, *The Degenerates*, which connects with Mental Health Month in May. Minh Le will team up again with Dan Santat to present a program on May 6 at 2 p.m., and Karen MacPherson will join in conversation with authors Erin Entrada Kelly and Terri Libenson on May 7 at 2 p.m. You can view P&P's events calendar and register for events (advance registration required, to receive link) at <https://www.politics-prose.com/events>

Become a "Writers in Schools" Author with PEN/Faulkner

PEN/Faulkner's Writers in Schools program works with DC school students in grades 3-12 and is currently accepting applications from authors interested in joining its list. The organization is especially interested in books for elementary grades and in books by or about Latinx/Hispanic writers and bilingual books/books in Spanish. Writers receive a modest honorarium for visits. More information on the program and how to submit a book for consideration can be found [on the website](#).

Volunteer with PEN/Faulkner

Read Up is PEN/Faulkner's volunteer program. Volunteers provide integral support to multiple facets of the organization, all of which are connected to books, writing and meaningful conversation. Volunteers help in many ways: serving as an author ambassador on school visits throughout the city; mentoring local public school students in writing, one on one or in small groups; or supporting the success of PEN/Faulkner's public reading series, Literary Conversations. More about specific opportunities is available [on the website](#).

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