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Emily Arnold McCully at University of Tennessee Hodges Library

"Oh Emily, why don't you draw something people will like," illustrator/author Emily Arnold McCully's mother once said. Obviously, McCully took her mother's advice to heart, illustrating over one hundred children's books over the last twenty years and winning the 1993 Caldecott Medal for her book, *Mirette on the High Wire*. Brought to the University of Tennessee Hodges Library by the Center for Children's and Young Adult Literature on February 10, McCully entertained the crowded auditorium with the story of her life in art.

McCully began by explaining how her art was fostered by a childhood that allowed room for creative freedom. She grew up in an era that gave children more leisure time for imaginative play, a time when children had time to be themselves—and before the entertainment function of children's literature was usurped by television. She began reading and drawing at age three and was encouraged and critiqued by her mother. "Why don't you practice that and try to get it right," her mother would ask. Today, McCully views drawing as the "best discipline for looking at something hard enough to really see it" and as the best way for a child to connect brain, eye, and hand.

(continued...)

Emily Arnold McCully signs books for her appreciative UT student fans.



Emily Arnold McCully continued...

McCully never considered the fine arts. She viewed herself as an illustrator from the very beginning and was always interested in how illustration could complement narrative. Her father was a radio writer and producer, and often McCully would illustrate the tales she heard on the radio.

McCully showed various examples of her work to illustrate the stages of the publishing process and then projected slides from throughout her career onto the screen behind her. These slides allowed her to discuss the inspirations for and creative decisions in *Picnic*, *Beautiful Warrior*, *How to Eat Fried Worms*, *The Bobbin Girl*, and *Mirette on the High Wire*.

McCully followed the slide presentation with a question and answer session before leading the crowd upstairs to a catered reception. Even though the author signed many books before the lecture, she gladly stayed at the reception until everyone had a chance to talk with her and to have their favorite McCully book autographed.

McCully sketched a pirate scene that took on sea-dog depth in a matter of seconds.



McCully Visits the Oak Ridge Schools

“From the reaction of some 600 students watching, one would have thought Emily Arnold McCully was performing one of her book character’s high-wire acts. But the children’s author and illustrator was simply demonstrating—to the tune of a multitude of ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’—her illustrating skills.” That’s how *The Oak Ridger* described the McCully lecture.

Presenting to the third and fourth grade students of Oak Ridge on February 11, 2000, McCully sketched a pirate scene that took on sea-dog depth in a matter of seconds. Her easel was projected on the large screen at the Oak Ridge High School Auditorium stage as she drew very quickly. She told the students that she always draws quickly, that she had never been to art school to learn all of the proper techniques, but that what mattered to her was for things to look alive with movement. Assisted by student participation, she then showed students the technique for developing character, setting and plot through her illustration, peppering her deft left hand with advice for young creators—“If you do anything creative, you can’t try to please other people.

(continued...)



You have to take risks, you have to look deep inside yourself...and then that will be your best work.”

According to McCully, rejection and frustration are a big part of an author/illustrator's life. She showed a series of slides about her life and work, including the trash can in her studio which was piled with drafts. “About seventy-five percent of all I do goes into the trash can,” said McCully. But she also noted she has never started a book that she did not finish.

In addition to her demonstration, the author sat on the edge of the stage and projected illustrations and read her as-yet-unpublished third Mirette book.

In response to a student question, Ms. McCully said her personal favorite among her works is *Beautiful Warrior* because it was a complicated story in which she learned all sorts of things she had not known before.

McCully's afternoon session to the teachers of Oak Ridge, sponsored by the Teacher Center, brought wide praise from the participants. She shared writing techniques that could be shared with students in the classroom.

Literature and Students' Writing

The latest installment of the Center's Workshop series was presented March 15 by Dr. Judith Neff. The workshop, entitled “The Effects of Children's Literature on Students' Writing,” was held in UT's Hodges Library. The program concentrated on the positive contribution children's literature makes to the creativity and writing skills of children. Dr. Neff began the session by using several exemplary picture books such as *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen and *Time of Wonder* by Robert McCloskey to illustrate what kinds of books can be used to encourage memoir writing by students. Secondly, she highlighted research findings that children are positively influenced by literature while writing on their own. Thirdly, Dr. Neff made her own suggestions for ways teachers and librarians can create environments where children's writing can be positively influenced by children's literature. The workshop concluded with discussion of the challenge of creating classrooms where children's own reading choices are respected and supported and where reading and writing are consistently connected.

The Center for Children's & Young Adult Literature encourages publishers to place their newest published children's books on review in the Center, where these books will be available for study by teachers, public and school librarians, college students, and parents of school-age children. The Center is located on the second floor of the University of Tennessee Hodges Library and is open 24 hours a day (except for Friday and Saturday evening) throughout the school year.

Awards from ALA's Association for Library Service to Children

2000 Newbery Medal

(to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children)

Bud, Not Buddy

by Christopher Paul Curtis

(*Bud, Not Buddy* was also this year's winner of the Coretta Scott King Award to an author or illustrator of African descent, presented by ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table.)

2000 Caldecott Medal

(to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book)

Joseph Had a Little Overcoat

by Simms Taback

2000 Pura Belpré Award

(to a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator)

For narrative: ***Under the Royal Palms: A Childhood in Cuba*** by Alma Flor Ada

For illustration: ***Magic Windows*** by Carman Lomas Garza

2000 Mildred L. Batchelder Award

(to the publisher of the most outstanding translation of a children's book originally published in a foreign country)

Walker and Company for ***The Baboon King*** by Anton Quintana (translated from the Dutch by John Nieuwenhuizen)

Get on our mailing list! To receive announcements of future events, send your name and address to:
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Scholastic

Simon & Schuster

William Morrow

Pop-up book master
Robert Sabuda
is coming to town

November 9

Robert Sabuda, children's book author and illustrator, will be coming to UT on November 9, 2000. Labeled a "paper engineer" by *The New Yorker*, Sabuda is a modern master of the old-fashioned pop-up book. He will undoubtedly discuss the steps he goes through in creating these three-dimensional wonders, while also discussing the role of the illustrator in children's literature.

Sabuda's works have achieved several honors and awards including the Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Award, the Golden Kite Award, and the Booklist Editor's Choice Award. His many books include *Tutankhamen's Gift*, *A Christmas Alphabet*, *A Kwanzaa Celebration*, and *The Paper Dragon*.

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