



Jo Osborne Award for Humor in Children's Literature

Ohio Library Foundation, 35 E. Gay Street, Ste 305, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3138

April 2, 2001

Kevin Henkes

Dear Mr. Henkes,

I am very happy to officially announce that you are the winner of the Jo Osborne Award for Humor in Children's Literature for 2002. I am also pleased that Susan Hirschman and Janet Hickman were able to reach you by phone to convey this news as soon as it happened.

The award was established six years ago to honor the memory of Jo Osborne, a well-loved children's librarian who touched the lives of thousands of children with her own humor and with the humor of authors and illustrators like you. Ms. Osborne's friends and family wanted to carry on the spirit of her life's work by recognizing the importance of this genre in children's literature that has been under-estimated. Children, of course, already seek out funny books, enjoy them, and even learn from them. With this award, we expect more adults to take humor seriously!

A local committee of librarians, teachers, and academicians conferred and produced a list of five nominees for a national jury, which ultimately selected you as the winner. This year's jury was composed of Charlotte Huck, author and Professor Emeritus, Ohio State University, Julie Cummins, Editor, School Library Journal, and Barbara Peterson, School Librarian in Tucson, Arizona.

The jury was impressed with the unique characters in your picture books. Each is memorable for its gentle and witty nature. With humor and heart, you've created stories that will help children grow. Readers can't help but smile as they learn how to deal with the human condition. Your illustrations are so full of humorous details and clever perspectives that the (already charming) text is enhanced many times over.

To emphasize the importance of humor across the professions, the Jo Osborne Award is presented at the Ohio State University Children's Literature Conference each year, where the winner is invited to be an honored guest and speaker. Janet Hickman, one of the conference coordinators, tells me that you will be able to accept the award at the conference. She will contact you soon with a formal invitation to participate in the conference, and with information about an honorarium that would be separate from the Osborne Award of \$500.

I am glad that you will accept the award in person, so that your own style of humor will be represented authentically. Mark Twain once said that the classics are something that people praise, but don't read. Humorous books have the opposite problem: they are read, but not praised. As a recipient of this award, you will be instrumental in turning that attitude around.

Jo Osborne approached life with two goals in mind: to work hard and to have fun. I would like to thank you and congratulate you for all your hard work that has caused so many people to smile, chortle, and have fun while reading.

Best Regards and Grins,

Rachel Alexander
Chairperson,
Jo Osborne Award for Humor in Children's Literature Committee