

Welcoming the Cybils Awards

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If there's one thing we know about bloggers, it's that they're not shy about voicing their desire for change and making it happen. So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that within days of a blog posting about limitations of the established children's book awards, the bloggers had launched their own awards. The Cybils (Children's and YA Bloggers' Literary Awards) operate on a new populist model in which anyone — young or old, expert or beginning reader— can nominate the books they love most.

Awards are given for books in eight categories: Fantasy and Science Fiction, Graphic Novels, Non-Fiction — Middle Grade and YA, Middle Grade Fiction, YA Fiction, Fiction Picture Books, Non-Fiction Picture Books, and Poetry. Once nominations have been made, a panel of bloggers do the first stage of judging, then a second group of judges comprised of librarians, teachers, homeschoolers, authors and illustrators, and others make the final decisions in each category.

“Think of it as Wal-Mart meets Nordstrom over kids' books,” said Anne Boles Levy, a freelance book reviewer for the Los Angeles Times. Levy can now be found at her own children's book review blog, www.bookbuds.net. As an official spokesblogger for the Cybils Awards, she is delighted with their first year's results, which were announced recently. The awards were made after reviewing nearly 500 nominations and involved more than 75 bloggers.

Children's publishers have been quick to respond to the awards, which have a built-in publicity and marketing system — announcing award winners across the “kidlitosphere” blog community and providing links to purchase the books.

Nominations are open for 2008. “Graphic novels are of particular interest because we want to encourage more entries in that category,” says Levy. “We're also hoping to have award stickers to give to winning publishers for their books and an award trophy to give to the winners. The group sees this as benefiting everyone involved particularly the winning authors and illustrators whose books get substantial media attention and then are only a few mouse clicks away from a book sale and being sent home for a great read.

For more information on the Cybils Awards and to make nominations, visit <http://dadtalk.typepad.com/cybils>. 10:11/07