

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Program Policy and Procedure Manual Grades 6-8

Background

The Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award (LYRC) is a reading enrichment program of the Louisiana Center for the Book, a department within the State Library of Louisiana, with additional support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Louisiana Chapters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Book Taco, TeachingBooks.net, Perma-Bound, and the Louisiana Library and Book Festival Foundation. The program was founded in 1999 and the first award was given in 2000. Participation in this program has climbed from 5,485 votes the first year to over 29,000 students participating in 2009. Now entering its 21st year, the program continues to encourage Louisiana's youth to read for pleasure.

Charge to the Committee

To read books published three years prior to the award being given and to create a recommended list of 12 outstanding titles for Louisiana students in grades 6 through 8. For example, books chosen for the 2022-2023 list must have been published in 2020.

Purpose

The purpose of the program is to foster a love of reading in the youth of Louisiana by motivating them to participate in the recognition of outstanding contemporary literature for youth.

Audience

Louisiana students in grades 6th through 8th, schools, educators, librarians, and public libraries

Disclaimer

The Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Program provides a recreational reading list. Participation in this program is voluntary. This list does not specifically support any particular curriculum; although, it does provide study guides which teachers can incorporate into their school's program of study. An annotated list of nominated titles will be provided on the State Library's website (www.state.lib.la.us) to aid in this selection.

In an effort to provide titles that appeal to middle school readers across the state, the list will contain books with a variety of reading levels, subject matters, and an assortment of genres. The list will contain titles for reluctant readers as well as titles to challenge more mature and advanced readers.

Though this list is intended for students in 6th-8th grade, not every book will suit every reader, which is why there are many titles to choose from. Remember that students only need to read three titles on the list in order to vote. We understand that students in our state attend a variety of different schools: public, Montessori, private, parochial, charter, etc. We recognize that it is up to the individual reader to select the titles they wish to read from the list, and we encourage parents and caregivers to be involved. Each school and public librarian should take their individual collection needs into account and consider each title before purchasing every book on the list. An

annotated list of nominated titles will be provided on the State Library's website (www.state.lib.la.us) to aid in this selection.

When considering a title for the nominated list, the work as a whole will be considered. We regret that occasionally middle school titles may contain small amounts of colorful language. Those titles will not be automatically removed from consideration; rather, the work as a whole will be considered. We bear in mind that regular television commercials, network TV shows and PG13-rated movies are permitted to have limited amounts of profanity and edgy situations. (Rating Information from the Motion Picture Association of America: Understanding Film Ratings, <http://www.mpa.org/film-ratings/>)

When selecting titles, the LYRC committee adheres to the American Library Association (ALA) intellectual freedom guidelines and statements, as well as the National Council of Teachers of English, including but not limited to following:

- Library Bill of Rights: <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>
- Code of Ethics of the ALA
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/proethics/codeofethics/codeethics>
- “Free Access to Libraries for Minors”:
<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=interpretations&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8639>
 - "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that parents—and only parents—have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children—and only their children—to library resources. Parents who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children. Librarians and library governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child.
- Libraries: An American Value, Statement by ALA
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/statementspols/librariesamerican>
- NCTE's (National Council of Teachers of English) Right to Read Position Statement,
<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline>

Diversity

“Librarianship focuses on individuals, in all their diversity, and that focus is a fundamental value of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) and its members. Diversity is, thus, honored in the Association and in the collections and services that libraries provide to young adults” (*YALSA Committee Policies and Procedures Handbook*).

- Diversity in Collection Development Statement:
<http://www.ala.org/template.cfm?section=interpretations&template=/contentmanagement/contentdisplay.cfm&contentid=8530>

Program Details

Each year a committee of public librarians, school librarians and teachers, headed by the Children and Teen Services Library Consultant at the State Library of Louisiana, compiles the 6th-8th grade

LYRC nominated list of 12 titles. The consultant, acting as committee chair, has the final authority in selecting titles for each year’s ballot. Occasionally, an outstanding committee member may serve a rotation as chair instead of the library consultant. Suggestions for titles to be considered for the ballot may be sent to the chair of the committee and/or the administrative coordinator. The final list will be a well-balanced selection of high-quality fiction, nonfiction, and/or poetry. Students may read or listen to the books and vote for their favorite one. Students only need to read three titles to vote. Votes are due by March 1st of the award year. For example, votes for the 2020-2021 LYRC list must be submitted to the State Library by March 1st 2021. Additional details are available on the LYRC website.

Timeline

| Publication Year | LYRC Award Nominated List | Deadline to nominate titles | Committee Chooses Titles | Students Vote By |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2018 | 2020-2021 | March 2019 | July 2019 | March 1 st 2021 |
| 2019 | 2021-2022 | March 2020 | July 2020 | March 1 st 2022 |
| 2020 | 2022-2023 | March 2021 | July 2021 | March 1 st 2023 |
| 2021 | 2023-2024 | March 2022 | July 2022 | March 1 st 2024 |
| 2022 | 2024-2025 | March 2023 | July 2023 | March 1 st 2025 |

The titles that receive the most votes from the students are the award winners. The books with the second most votes are the honor books. The award or honor book authors or illustrators are invited to the Louisiana Book Festival in the fall to accept their awards.

Selection Criteria

Eligibility of Books

- Books must be published three years prior to the award being given. For example, books that are considered for the 2022-2023 list must have been published in 2020. Nominations of titles will be accepted until March 1st 2021.
- If a nominated title is in a chronological series, the book must be the first book in the sequence. Titles that are part of a group of companion novels or prequels, that can be read independently and out of sequence from the accompanying books, may be considered.
- Considerations for inclusion on the list include literary quality; effectiveness of expression; creativity; authenticity; reading enjoyment; reading level; interest level; genre representation; racial and ethnic diversity; diversity of social, political, economic, and/or religious viewpoints; and availability.
- The books must be *in print* in the United States to be eligible for the list.
- The author does not have to be an American citizen, but the book must be published in the United States, in print and readily available.
- The book may be published originally in another country, but the U.S. copyright date must be three years prior to the LYRC award list it is being considered for. For example, a copyright date of 2020 for the LYRC award 2022-2023 list.
- Occasionally a title will have a copyright date for one year but the first printing will be in the next calendar year. For example, a title may have a copyright date of

December 2019 but the first publication/printing of the book may be January 2020. In this case we will accept the book for consideration to the 2022-2023 list since it was not printed until 2020.

Consideration List

Books must be reviewed favorably in at least one professional journal. An exception may be made if the title has a Louisiana interest and/or is nominated by more than one committee member OR if the title has been given an esteemed award or is placed on an esteemed list. A Louisiana interest could mean that the book is set in Louisiana or that the author or illustrator is from Louisiana. Esteemed awards and lists could include the ALA Youth Media Awards and the YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers.

Arrangement of Consideration List

The LYRC title consideration list is arranged into the following categories: Committee Nominations, Field Nominations, Starred Reviews, and Removed from Consideration. The consideration list of titles is arranged this way before the spring meeting.

Committee Nominations

Committee members must read the books they nominate for LYRC consideration. Therefore, committee nominated titles are given preference because they have been read and vetted by a committee member. The exception is that the chair and/or administrative coordinator may add titles to the consideration list based on professional reviews if the committee has not made enough nominations to create a well-balanced consideration list.

Field Nominations

Field Nominations are titles recommended by anyone who is not on the committee. Anyone can nominate a title. Authors, publishers, teachers, students, and others frequently submit titles for consideration.

The goal is for the committee members and chair to try to read and/or review the Field Nominations and Starred Reviews titles before the first meeting. When a committee member reads a title in the Field Nomination section and believes it would be a good fit for our LYRC list, they need to email the chair and/or administrative coordinator and ask that this title to be moved to the Committee Nominated section of the list. This gives the title priority. If a committee member reads a title in the Field Nomination section and believes it is not a good fit at all for the LYRC list or if the title has something that disqualifies it from consideration, then the committee member needs to email the chair and/or administrative coordinator so the title can be moved to the Removed from Consideration section. This saves everyone time and duplication of effort. For example, if a Field Nomination has a publication date that is too old or if it is the second book in a series, the book would be disqualified. The chair and administrative coordinator make every effort to catch these disqualifying details before putting any title on the consideration list but sometimes they do slip through.

If no committee member vouches for a Field Nominated title (bumping it up to the Committee Nominated section of the list) before the first committee meeting, and does not

argue for it at the first meeting then the title is removed from consideration. These field nominations, from sources other than current committee members, must be seconded/supported by a LYRC committee member to be added to the Committee Nominated section of the consideration list.

Please email the committee chair and/or the administrative coordinator to nominate a title for consideration, request a title be removed, bump a title from the Field Nomination category to the Committee Nominated category, etc. The administrative coordinator compiles the consideration list and keeps the committee informed of the current list.

Starred Reviews

This category of the consideration list includes books given Starred Reviews by the professional journals School Library Journal, Booklist, Kirkus, Bulletin, and Publishers Weekly. Based on reading the reviews, if the chair believes a book qualifies for the LYRC list and is a good candidate, the chair will add it in this section for review and consideration. The same rules apply with the Starred Reviews category as with the Field Nominations section of the consideration list. If no committee member vouches for a Starred Reviews title, (bumping it up to the Committee Nominated section of the list) before the first committee meeting and does not argue for it at the first meeting, then the title is removed from consideration. These Starred Reviews titles must be seconded/supported by a LYRC committee member to be added to the Committee Nominated section of the consideration list.

Removed from Consideration

When a committee member reads a book from any of the consideration list sections and finds something that disqualifies the book from consideration or overall believes that the title will not interest our intended audience, they need to email the chair and/or the administrative coordinator. Let the chair/administrative coordinator know which title should be removed from consideration and a brief description of the reason. When in doubt about a book and whether or not it should be removed please email or call the chair and/or administrative coordinator. Please note that not liking a book will not get a title removed from consideration. All opinions are valued, and what one committee member loathes, another may love. If there is inappropriate content that warrants automatic removal, the entire committee will be notified as soon as possible.

Balance of List

Books on the Middle School List should appeal to and be appropriate for at least 2 of the 3 grade levels 6-7 and 7-8. The exception is that one title may be selected just for grade 6 and one title may be selected just for grade 8 per LYRC list. In other words, there should be at least one title on the list for reluctant readers and at least one title for advanced/mature readers. “In Louisiana, 80% of all 4th and 8th grade students do not read at a proficient level” (*KidsCount*). “Keeping children reading through programs like LYRC, will encourage lifelong learning and a love of reading” (*State Library Strategic Plan 2008-2012*).

The nominated books must reflect a variety of reading levels, genres, interests, and subjects. Genres represented may include realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and humor. Graphic novels are especially appealing to reluctant readers. The committee will occasionally include outstanding nonfiction: poetry, biography, documentaries, etc. When considering a title, the work as a whole will be considered. While the committee tries to find quality nonfiction, there will not necessarily always be a nonfiction title on every year's list.

Special consideration may be given to titles that have Louisiana interest or are written by Louisiana authors.

LYRC Committee

The committee consists of 15-20 individuals from across the state. Committee members are:

- Public librarians who serve students in 6-8th grade
- School librarians who work directly with students in 6-8th grade
- English, Reading, Literature, and Language Arts teachers who work with students in 6-8th grade
- Paraprofessional library youth services support staff who work directly with students in 6-8th grade
 - When reviewing applications from library youth services support staff, youth service experience will be taken into consideration
- Retired individuals who fall into any of the previous four categories will also be considered

Qualifications

Committee members should directly interact with the age group represented by this committee, with the exception of retired individuals. If, after starting their 3 year term, a committee member has a change in circumstance and no longer works directly with the age group represented by this committee, they may still complete their term.

Committee members must not be working directly with any publishers, vendors, illustrators, authors or in any capacity that could influence the integrity of the committee. If a committee member has authored or illustrated a book nominated for consideration, that committee member should sit out that year.

Due to the large amount of reading required, it is recommended that individuals only serve on one Louisiana Readers' Choice committee at a time.

Terms

Individuals interested in serving on the 6-8th LYRC committee will fill out a LYRC Committee Volunteer Application (see appendix A). There are two required meetings that committee members are expected to attend each year. The meetings are held at a date and time most convenient for the committee members. (A poll will be sent out to choose.) Applicants are expected to inform their supervisor that they intend to serve on this

committee before filling out the application, especially if they will need to miss work or rearrange their work schedule to accommodate the two committee meetings.

Once the application is received, the Children and Teen Services Consultant and the State Library will review the application. The chair will appoint committee members to serve 3 year terms. The chair attempts to have an equal number public and school librarians/educators on each committee. The chair will aim to maintain a committee representative of all Louisiana: urban, suburban, rural and including individuals from northern, middle and southern parts of the state.

If a committee member is unable to serve their 3 year term, the State Library will appoint another qualified individual to fulfill the remainder of their term from the list of qualified applicants.

Ideally, members should not serve more than two consecutive terms on the same committee. Taking a break between terms is encouraged. However, if there are not enough qualified volunteers, the State Library reserves the right to reappoint an outstanding former committee member to fill a vacant position.

Committee Responsibilities

- To read books across multiple genres, using professional resources to select, evaluate and nominate titles. Many professional resources are available for free online. Recommended professional journals include School Library Journal, Kirkus, Booklist, etc. Sites like Goodreads and Amazon may also be utilized; however, please beware of biased and/or bogus reviews.
- To recommend outstanding titles to be added to the consideration list.
- To read books on the consideration list and give professional opinions to the committee on those titles.
- As committee members read titles, they need to make personal notes regarding: what they liked, what they did not like, etc.
- To maintain a level of professionalism while participating on the committee.
- To be familiar with the American Library Association's guidelines of Intellectual Freedom.
- To be familiar with the policies, procedures, and goals of the 6-8th grade Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Program.
- Attend two meetings annually, one online and one in person
- To compile the 12 title LYRC nominated list at the final meeting.
- To compile their favorite 20 titles under consideration approximately one week before the final meeting. This is very important!
- To provide professional advice to the chair on any other LYRC related issues, including recommendations for improving the LYRC program.
- To distinguish between personal convictions and the professional duty to this committee to select a balanced list, not allowing personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation. (*ALA Code of Ethics*)
- A delegation from the committee will be asked to present the selected titles as booktalks at the Louisiana Library Association's annual conference.

- If the award or honor book authors are able to attend the Book Festival, the Baton Rouge area committee members will be asked to help promote the LYRC Award Program so we have a good number of students attending the program. They may also be asked to volunteer as room monitors for the LYRC Award Ceremony and to be author escorts for the LYRC winning authors.

**The chair reserves the right to ask a committee member unable to fulfill their obligation of attending the two required meetings and providing their list of 20 favorite titles, two years in a row to resign.*

Chair Responsibilities

The committee chair is the current Childrens and Teen Services Consultant at the State Library working under the supervision of the State Librarian. The chair, with the assistance of the administrative coordinator, does the following:

- Oversees the selection and award process
- Schedules and moderates committee meetings
- Has the final authority in titles selected for the annual Nominated Louisiana Young Readers Choice list
- Facilitates the design and printing of LYRC materials including: bookmarks, posters, brochures, etc.
- Oversees statewide promotion and distribution of printed materials supporting the LYRC program
- Maintains the LYRC website
- Invites the LYRC award or honor book authors to attend the annual Louisiana Book Festival
- If a winning author can attend, the chair arranges the visit and coordinates the annual LYRC Award Ceremony
- Assists in the promotion of LYRC at schools, libraries, and organizations across the state
- Coordinates the representation of LYRC at the annual LA-LAMP tours
- Arranges the representation of LYRC at the annual LLA conference
- Compiles the annotated title lists
- Organizes the final consideration list into genres before the final meeting
- Compiles and totals all committee members' favorite titles before the final meeting to focus the direction of discussion
- Facilitates the creation of the LYRC study guides
- Arranges and moderates the annual LYRC committee meetings
- Moderates the LYRC email mailing list
- Supervises the funds and funding of the LYRC program
- Coordinates the publicity announcements of chosen LYRC lists and winning LYRC titles across the state
- Sees that publishers are aware of the LYRC lists and award winners
- Stays in contact with the current committee, keeping them updated to the most recent consideration lists and matters concerning LYRC that they need to be aware of

Discussion of Titles

Any title on the list is open for committee discussion. The committee should weigh the literary value of the titles; consider the interest of the intended audience, age appropriateness, readability, and the booktalking potential to sell the titles to the students, while at all times keeping intellectual freedom guidelines in mind.

Committee members are encouraged to use the LYRC email mailing list to discuss their thoughts and opinions on titles from the consideration list. The administrative coordinator also creates a Goodreads group for each committee year for additional discussion.

When a committee member recommends that a title be removed from the consideration list, a note will be made in the notes column. The title will have the name of the committee member suggesting removal and will state the reasoning. If that title is not brought up at the next committee meeting, it will be completely removed from the consideration list. The chair reserves the right to remove a title from the consideration list.

Committee Meetings

The committee will meet twice annually. The first meeting will take place in the spring, typically in the month of March. To make this first meeting more convenient and accessible to everyone, it will be an online meeting. Committee members will need a computer, tablet, or smart phone with internet to connect. The final meeting has historically been a face-to-face meeting and taken place in either June or July; however, due to the current pandemic, our last final meeting was held virtually, and the next may be as well.

The chair will make every effort to book the meeting on a date convenient for most committee members. A poll will be emailed to everyone three to four months before the final meeting to find the most favorable date. If the final meetings take place in person, they will take place in a public library meeting room if one is available in a suitable location. The chair will take into account the geographic locations of the committee members and work to find a centralized location.

- Committee members will bring a list of books they have read from the official consideration list along with any notes they have made regarding those titles.
- Before attending the final meeting, committee members will be asked to vote for their favorite 20 titles they would choose to be that year's LYRC list.
 - These 20 titles will be submitted approximately one week before the final meeting so the chair and/or administrative coordinator can compile that list.
 - The titles that appear most often in the committee submitted lists may be automatically be added to the final list. This may be subject to a vote.
 - The titles on this final, jointly compiled list will be the primary focus of the final meeting.
- The committee will discuss the chair compiled list to facilitate the choice of a well-balanced list of 12 titles.
- The committee may bring back a title from the original consideration list if the committee feels that it is needed to fill gap in making the final list more balanced.
- Committee members are encouraged to make brief statements about the books discussed. The chair reserves the right to cut the discussion of a title short if necessary.
- At the final meeting, committee members may only vote on titles they have read.

- As professionals, it is easy to become emotionally invested in a favorite title. However, at these meetings, the majority rules when we vote on a title for the nominated list. Just because a title is not selected for the nominated list, does not mean that it is not a good book. The titles that are not selected to the final nominated list are made available on our website as the consideration list.

Additional Statements of Intellectual Freedom

Intellectual Freedom for Young People:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intellectual-freedom-young-people>

Intellectual Freedom for Young People at School:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/foryoungpeople/atschool/school>

This manual was created using the following sources as a guide:

- The American Library Association's YALSA Handbook and Website documents
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/aboutyalsa/yalsahandbook.cfm>
- Texas Lone Star Reading policy manual
- Sunshine State Young Reader Award and Florida Teens Read Award website

Questions may be sent to Jamie Hebert, Administrative Coordinator, Louisiana Readers' Choice Awards, jhebert@slol.lib.la.us, (225) 342-4996.

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