

In Person

Mock Ezra Jack Keats Award

Lesson Plans & Materials



This kit is designed for in person activities, but due to the COVID-19 crisis, the developers have discussed and adapted it for remote or distance learning. Ideas include Read Alouds using scanned books and using Chats or reactions in programs like Zoom, depending on your group's ages. Please email us your additional ideas so that we can collect and share them with those who sign up.

The materials in this kit were developed in collaboration with teachers from Friends School of Baltimore and by librarians and teachers in New York, NY and Stamford, CT.

Special thanks to John Scott, Andy Hanes, Mary Kelley, Frances Morrissey and Diana White from Friends, Chris Carter, Teacher, NYC Department of Education, and to Caroline Ward, Youth Literature Consultant, for their creativity, commitment to advancing the appreciation of diverse children's literature in the classroom, for sharing their expertise and for making this toolkit possible.



Dear Friends,

The **Mock EJK Award Toolkit** is based on the real Ezra Jack Keats Award. The EJK Award honors outstanding authors and illustrators whose books, in the spirit of Keats, celebrate the diversity of our culture and depict children from the widest spectrum of ethnic groups and around the world.

A **Mock EJK Award** is a group activity that can be adapted for library users and groups of children from kindergarten through high school age. In this activity everyone comes together to read, discuss, and evaluate a selection of books eligible for the Award in order to make a group decision about what books most successfully meet the criteria you and your students have created for your award.

We've gathered together everything you'll need to guide your group through this module over the course of the school year with the bulk of the activities happening from January into March, in your classroom, school, library, community or homeschoolers group.

Subjects Covered in this kit include:

- ▶ A suggested **process** and **lesson plans** to run your Mock EJK Award
- ▶ A **timeline** based on a typical academic calendar
- ▶ Sample **criteria** and a sample **voting** process
- ▶ Ideas for producing your remote **Award Ceremony**
- ▶ **Background materials** about Ezra Jack Keats
- ▶ An outline of the **real EJK Award** process
- ▶ **Art project ideas** and clip art to use with your group
- ▶ Sample **social media** posts and graphics

While this toolkit is based on a number of actual Mock EJK Award programs, please feel free to modify it to best serve your needs. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and feedback.

Please send any thoughts to jmccarthy@ezra-jack-keats.org.

Deborah Pope, PhD
Executive Director, EJK Foundation

Introduction



Your Mock EJK Award Toolkit!

The process and timeline provided for your **Mock EJK Award** project are based on timing of the actual EJK Award.

- ▶ Initial prep can be done in the fall.
- ▶ The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation will share a list of eligible books for the actual EJK Award in advance.
- ▶ From this list, choose the books your group will consider for your Mock EJK Award winner and honorees.
- ▶ If possible, plan your Mock EJK Award to coincide with the real EJK Award process from January - March.

Basic components of the program include close reading of the texts, student discussion facilitated by the leaders, and finally the successful agreement on what books best fit the criteria to receive the award.



"As I read, I often found myself asking: What Would Keats Do? I don't know if I ever found an answer to that question, but I treasured the time I spent reading books and posing that question to myself."

- Don Tate

Author, Illustrator

Keats Award Winner and Honoree

What are the benefits of running a Mock EJK Award?

- ▶ Sharpen critical reading skills, refine verbal communication and build visual literacy.
- ▶ Improve social interaction and strengthen a sense of community between children and their school or library.
- ▶ Increase cross curricular connections.
- ▶ Create opportunities for children to make personal connections between literature and real life.
- ▶ Encourage children to become familiar with people and places that may be new to them.
- ▶ Inspire children to become more aware of being agents for social and/or personal change.
- ▶ Provide an opportunity to discuss the importance of diversity and equity in literature and in life, which can help to:
 - ▶ Let children express their desire to see diversity in the books they read.
 - ▶ Increase their vocabulary related to diversity.
- ▶ Enhance younger children's ability to use math skills in the real world (involvement in the voting and tallying.)

What is needed to run a Mock EJK Award?

The tools provided here are flexible enough to develop special activities in your school, library, home school and community group to fit your needs and your budget.

How can the Mock EJK Award Process be adapted & adjusted for children of all ages?

- ▶ Younger children
 - ▶ Often depend on illustrations for the storyline, but can then be guided into in-depth discussions of a book's meaning.
 - ▶ Might be better able to judge a smaller number of books than older kids.
 - ▶ Can share thoughts in discussions with caregivers or an appointed "buddy".
- ▶ Older kids
 - ▶ Can engage in more independent analytical discussion of image and text.
 - ▶ Might serve as mentors to younger children.
 - ▶ Can create their own online discussion groups to evaluate the books.

Read on!

September-December Preliminary Activities



There is much you can do during the fall semester to prepare and build excitement with your students, your school or library, or with your community.

Sign-up

Let the EJK Foundation (EJKF) know you will be conducting a **Mock EJK Award**. Go to this link (<https://tinyurl.com/vywdpl3>) to sign up and receive updates about the Mock EJK Awards. In addition to our suggested eligible booklist, you'll receive other useful information and tips and we will connect you with others doing a Mock.

Select & Obtain Your Books

- ▶ Choose your books from the eligible list offered.
- ▶ Decide how many books to include in your Mock EJK based on reading levels, time and budget.
- ▶ Find out if your institution or an auxiliary organization (i.e. a PTA) can fund the purchase of your books.
- ▶ Check with book publishers for permission to record read alouds for your group to access.
- ▶ Contact the EJKF for more ideas about funding.

Document Your Mock EJK Award Process

- ▶ Make a plan to document your program with photographs.
- ▶ Remember to get signed releases from all guardians, if you don't already have them.

Materials to Create & Display Art

Decide what kind of display materials you want to create to promote or "advertise" your program. Involve your group in their creation to heighten their excitement about the process. Display materials can be used in the months *prior* to the actual Mock EJK Award Program as well as *during*.

- ▶ Display materials may include the most recent **EJK Award poster** for your classroom or library. You may download the poster from the EJK Foundation website. (<https://tinyurl.com/rsz4269>)
- ▶ Check out this **Mock EJK Award Medal** that we have created for your use. You're welcome to simply use the clip art file provided and add in your school, library or group name. Use it to create a poster or other artwork. (<https://tinyurl.com/y8neqgjm>)
- ▶ Children can create collages and drawings featuring the Mock EJK Award Medal to create a poster with the books being considered.
- ▶ Children can also create a poster of their favorite books and/or characters
- ▶ Brainstorm additional art projects with them.

Design Your Award Ceremony

We suggest a few *preliminary* plans to start. A more detailed section (page 7) delves into ceremony logistics.

- ▶ **Set the Date:** The real EJK Awards are announced the first Tuesday of March so you may want to plan your ceremony to correspond with that date.
- ▶ **Invite Speakers:** Use this opportunity to build and strengthen your school or library community. Put the date on their calendars earlier rather than later and keep in touch with them to build anticipation. Consider having the children extend the invitations. Invites may include:
 - ▶ Your supervisor or principal to be a host or guest speaker.
 - ▶ Your colleagues and their groups, especially those who work with younger or older children.
- ▶ **The EJK Foundation Participation:** If you'd like to invite Deborah Pope, Executive Director of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, to participate in your ceremony remotely, please email your invitation to Jocelyn McCarthy by Dec. 1st. Dr. Pope will let you know if she or another member of the EJK Award Committee can attend.
- ▶ **Notify the Winners and Honorees:** Let your students know that after their award ceremony you may write to the authors and illustrators to let them know they've won a Virtual Mock EJK Award! (Prepare them for not hearing back from either).



The Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans and Materials

January: Stock Up, Discuss Process, Read, Deliberate



A review of the program, its goals, and processes, is a great way to begin the New Year. Discussion points are provided for each of the following sections:

- ▶ Your Book Selection
- ▶ Your Criteria and How To Apply It
- ▶ Reading and Discussing Submitted Books
- ▶ Your Nominating and Voting Methodology
- ▶ How You Will Announce and Celebrate the Winners

We also suggest referring to:

- ▶ Friends School of Baltimore Criteria (This Page)
- ▶ About Ezra and His Books (Page 5)
- ▶ The real EJK Award (Page 6)

Friends School of Baltimore Criteria

- ▶ **Childhood:** Where did we see childhood in this book? How did the author address childhood in the text? The illustrations? What are the messages about childhood? How did you see yourself and your childhood in the book?
- ▶ **Family:** What's being celebrated about family? What are things that are similar/different from your family? What message about family does this book send?
- ▶ **Diversity:** The FSB leaves this topic very open to the children's interpretation. One student brought up biodiversity. Questions you might consider are -- What do you think diversity means and how is it a topic that is presented in the books you're reading? How do you see or define diversity?
- ▶ **Words and pictures go together:** Do they do this well? Can you identify pages in which this works really well? How are the two related? Are they telling a complementary story?
- ▶ **Excites your brain:** When you read the book can you not wait to get to the next page? How did it excite your brain?
- ▶ **Hugs your heart:** You may want to talk about the fact that your heart feels lots of different things and ask such questions as -- How does it hit your heart? How did it make you feel? Does it remind you of something special?
- ▶ **Makes you want to learn:** What does this book inspire you to find out more about? Does it excite you to read more books? If the children aren't readers yet you may ask -- What did you enjoy about this book? Might you like to read another like it?
- ▶ **Social and Personal Change:** Did the book help you to learn more about your community, the people around you, yourself?

Your Book Selection

This is a great opportunity to discuss the huge variety of children's books published each year from fiction and nonfiction to fantasy and poetry.

- ▶ Talk about how the books being considered were chosen.
- ▶ Tell them how many books they will read.
- ▶ Let them know that they may be examining some of the same books as the real EJK Award Committee, but set expectations by letting them know that they may not select the same award and honor books.

Your Criteria & How To Apply It In Discussions

Here are thoughts about criteria and a few ways to lead your group in this most critical aspect of your Mock EJK Awards

- ▶ Feel free to use or adapt the **Friends School of Baltimore** criteria depending on your group. Consider speaking about what "In the spirit of Keats..." means. We have provided you with a slide of the criteria to use in your virtual presentations. (<https://tinyurl.com/y83qxgpz>)
- ▶ Review info Ezra Jack Keats' life (See Page 5) and most importantly his work as a way to immerse your group in the neighborhood that he created for Peter and his friends.
- ▶ Let your group know the difference between the "real" criteria (See page 6) and the criteria they're using.
- ▶ Print out and display the criteria for easy reference.
- ▶ Describe how they will analyze, evaluate and compare the text and illustrations in each book, in comparison to the other books and in relation to the criteria.
- ▶ Show and evaluate past winners and honor books. This exercise can illustrate the difference between the two categories. It can also help build a connection between their decisions and those of the EJK Award judges.

The Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans and Materials

January: continued



Ezra Jack Keats and the EJK Award

Ezra Jack Keats (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/ezras-life>) was an award-winning author and illustrator of books for children. Many of Ezra's stories are about a group of friends growing up in the city, like where Ezra grew up in Brooklyn, NY.

Ezra's Book *The Snowy Day*

If you haven't ever read *The Snowy Day*, go to the EJK Foundation website to see and listen to a wonderful animated Read Aloud version of the book. Uniquely, all of the voices and the sound track were performed and read by one individual, Napoleon Maddox. (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/read-aloud/the-snowy-day>)

What is the Origin of the EJK Award?

In 1984, a New York Public Librarian, Hannah Nuba, decided there should be a children's book award that encourages and celebrates the creation of books that reflect different ethnicities and cultures, and models kindness and empathy. Knowing Ezra's books, she proposed the creation of the award to Martin and Lillie Pope, the heads of the EJK Foundation at the time. The Award was established and has been bestowed since 1986. (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/about-the-ejk-award>)

Why is the EJK Award Unique?

The EJK Award honors outstanding authors and illustrators whose books, in the spirit of Keats, celebrate the diversity of our culture, and depict children from the widest spectrum of ethnic groups and from around the world. It recognizes new talent, having identified early career authors and illustrators, many of whom have become today's most popular makers of children's books.

Who Produces the EJK Award?

The EJK Foundation and the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi, are proud to work together to produce the EJK Award, which has the most diverse group of winners and honorees of any children's book award, as well as the most ethnically balanced group of book characters. (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org>) (<https://www.degrummond.org>)

When is the Award Given?

The award ceremony takes place every April, with over 500 teachers, librarians and literature scholars in attendance, during the Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. (<https://www.usm.edu/childrens-book-festival>)

To view the 2020 Virtual Award Ceremony go to: <https://youtu.be/fA2HG0fHhFE>

Reading & Discussing Eligible Books

- ▶ Decide when the group will read the books, if they will talk about the books every day, every week or just at the end of the process.
- ▶ Let children know if they will have an opportunity to read the books on their own. (See page 3: Select and Obtain Your Books & Prepare for Your Mock EJK Award Program).
- ▶ Discuss the schedule as well as how and when the winners will be announced.

Guided Reading Ideas

The way you conduct your guided readings will be based on your learning environment.

- ▶ **Read Alouds:** Introduce books as titles they will be voting on, read the book(s) aloud and facilitate discussion including going over your selected criteria in-depth.
- ▶ **Show Illustrations:** Show covers or pages of each book. If possible, projecting them onto a large screen for a read aloud can inspire children to see a book in a different way. If you can do this, it's a plus.
- ▶ **Quiet Reading Time:** Setting time aside for younger children to read, reread and view the books is important. Place the books in a special basket or on a dedicated shelf.
- ▶ **Discussion Time:** Suggest at-home reads and discussions with families as learning opportunities if they have access to the eligible books or if you have a lending system in place.
- ▶ **Breakout Sessions & Buddy Systems:** Depending on your setting and the age of your group, you may be able encourage breakout sessions for older children to ponder specific questions or books with peers. Younger children can have brief discussions about a given book and question with an assigned "reading buddy" from a group of older children.



"When judging the books, never fall in love with your book selections. It is most embarrassing when the committee sees you crying (or sighing) when your book is not selected. Always, keep smiling."

- Claudette McLinn
Executive Director
Center for the Study of
Multicultural Children's Literature

The Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans and Materials

January & February



The Real Ezra Jack Keats Award

We are proud to share our process so that everyone holding Mock EJK Award can make their experience "real" too.

EJK Award Criteria: The Award is given annually to a new writer and a new illustrator for a picture book that:

- Highlights the universal qualities of childhood and the strength of the family
- Reflects the multicultural nature of our world
- Has an original text and original story (no folktales)
- Unifies illustrations and text
- Avoids stereotypes
- Highlights a child's freedom to be who they want to be or what they want to be
- Is respectful of the reader's intelligence, sensitivity, curiosity, and love of learning
- Demonstrate excellent command of the chosen medium
- Displays freshness and originality of language and literary expression

EJK Award Eligibility: Authors or illustrators may have no more than three books published prior to the one submitted. Books must be published in North America in English. Self-published books are not eligible.

EJK Award Selection Committee: The Committee is composed of nine people and includes illustrators, authors, librarians, early childhood educators, book reviewers, literary critics, and members of major professional organizations.

Timeline for the Real EJK Awards

February to December: Book Selection

- Publishers submit books for consideration to each committee member (approximately 360 books)
- Committee members read every book and choose five books to be considered for the Writer Award and five for the Illustrator Award

January/February: Deliberations and Final Plans

- The Committee deliberates for two days
- The Committee chooses the winners and honorees
- Publishers, winners and honorees are notified

March: Winners and Honorees Announced the First Tuesday in March

- Writers and illustrators can tell all their friends!
- Publishers order EJK Award medallions to put on the covers of the winning and honoree books

Many EJK Award and Honor winners, whether authors and illustrators, have gone on to write and illustrate many more books and win additional awards. They've also been able to earn a living doing something they love, which is a big award in itself.

Your Nominating and Voting Methodology

This is a critical phase of the Award process -- one that the real EJK Award Committee takes seriously. We hope your students will too! Below are some ways to organize and think about your voting.

- **Voting Process:** Explain the nominating and voting process to your group and discuss how long they will have to make a decision. A third grade class in Stamford encouraged each child to take notes on eligible books as they read them, which helped them focus as they began voting. The Friends School of Baltimore spread all of the books on a rug and allowed the children to take a book walk before voting.
- **Final Submissions:** As discussion of the books progresses and everyone agrees on which books to eliminate, remove those that are clearly no longer in the running. In Stamford they selected a dozen books to discuss and narrowed the finalists down to five. The Friends School narrowed their original list down to a dozen finalists.
- **Final Voting Schedule:** If you conduct voting several times throughout your process, you may schedule your group's final voting at the end of February. Some like to wait to announce their winner and honoree until the Award Ceremony.

Voting

Vote By Criteria: Create a ballot that shows each book cover and each of the criteria such as those listed in these materials. Each voter can select their chosen title for each of the criteria.

Vote By Overall Book: Create posters that have images of each book cover. Each child can vote using the No Ballot Method described below for the book they like the best.

Create and Use Ballots: Three are described here. Once decided, consider setting up privacy booths using tri-fold boards on desks.

- **Paper:** Check out the paper ballot that was used at Friends. They voted using star stamps, but children can also circle their choice. (<https://tinyurl.com/uo3y2dl>)
- **Laminate:** Laminate several copies of a ballot you or your group design and the children can vote using dry erase markers, so that you can use the same sheets repeatedly.
- **On-line:** Some schools have access to and use Seesaw or another electronic portfolio system. With this method, students can both cast ballots, and with the guidance of a leader (depending on which system you use) children can discuss and record the reasoning behind their votes.

No Ballot Method: Ballots aren't needed for this simple and commonly used method sometimes good with smaller children:

- Lay submitted books out on a table and put a basket next to each book.
- Ask children to walk around and place paper votes (5 -10 post-its or colored pieces of paper) in the basket of those they like:
 - 3 votes = favorite ► 2 votes = 2nd choice ► 1 vote = 3rd choice
- Count the votes (Math project!)
- Select a pre-determined number of books that receive the most votes for winner and honor books.

The Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans and Materials

February & March



February: Final Planning for your Ceremony

- ▶ Finalize the Date for your Event: Let everyone know!
- ▶ Confirm Your Special Guests and Speakers: Follow-up with confirmed guests and speakers to be your host, your award presenter(s) and to fill other roles at your event.
- ▶ Create a Run of Show: This document may include a list of school, library or other officials attending, but most importantly it will detail the timing of your ceremony and how it will progress from speaker to speaker.

A sample schedule:

- * 9:45 - 10 am: Special guests arrive. Children enter and are seated.
 - * 10:10: Event Begins: Group leader welcomes everyone and gives introductory remarks about the process & results
 - * 10:13: Group leader introduces honored guests
 - * 10:15: Guest welcomes everyone, says how proud they are to be there, intros the person to present the honoree(s), etc.
- ▶ Draft Remarks: Based upon the final Run of Show, draft your remarks including a brief introduction of the award, your process, your criteria, how many great discussions and how much fun you had, and the announcement of your Honor Books and the winner of your Mock EJK Book Award!

Decorations for Your Ceremony

Collect and create any special items you might want on stage such as the books or items your group may have made which may include:

- ▶ A Mock EJK Award Poster of your winners and honorees using your Mock EJK medallion
- ▶ Materials provided and created at the beginning of the program
- ▶ A 2020 EJK Award Poster downloaded from the EJK Foundation website
- ▶ A podium sign (if you are using a podium) that says [Your Group's Name] Mock EJK Award

Plan and Reach out to Local Media (February and March)

We suggest announcing your Mock EJK Award publicly. Depending on whether you are in a school, library or other type of community, consider sharing your process and celebration with your school board or education department, your library leadership, your local newspaper or even a local television station. This is exactly the type of human interest story local stations love to report on!

March: "Real" & Mock EJK Award Ceremonies

EJK Award Announcement

Check out the EJK Foundation website on the first Tuesday of March to find out the new winners and honorees. If you inform the EJK Foundation about your groups' winners, they will let the Selection Committee know.

A Few Days Before Your Award Ceremony

Make final plans

- ▶ Review your Run of Show.
- ▶ Update and finalize all remarks. Send them to your confirmed speakers.
- ▶ Finish and display all artwork. Have the children make signs.
- ▶ Order or buy any snacks or drinks for a reception.

Day of your ceremony

- ▶ Designate special seats for any invited or special guests
- ▶ Have children greet presenters such as your host, award presenters, winning authors or illustrators, or others you feel are appropriate for VIP treatment
- ▶ Designate a group of children to set up the stage area, hang or display all creative projects you've undertaken, set up the snack table, and display a selection of the winning books and others they've read
- ▶ Make extra copies of the script for the podium just in case someone forgets to bring their talking points or remarks
- ▶ Skype in Deborah Pope or others who have agreed to be part of your ceremony

Celebrate the entire group for undertaking and succeeding at such a thoughtful and fun process



"...seeing picture books through someone else's eyes makes books, and the world, even richer."
- Melissa Sweet
Author, Illustrator

The Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans and Materials

Clip Art Sample Printables



Printable PNG files are available at <https://tinyurl.com/ycklduxx>.

Peter - *The Snowy Day*



Amy - *A Letter to Amy*



Willie - *Whistle for Willie*



Cat - *Hi Cat!*



The Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans and Materials

Bibliography



Mock EJK Award Sign Up Form : <https://tinyurl.com/vywdpl3>
EJK Award Poster : <https://tinyurl.com/rsz4269>
EJK Mock Medallion : <https://tinyurl.com/y8neqgjm>
Friends School of Baltimore criteria slides : <https://tinyurl.com/y83qvgpz>
Ezra Jack Keats' Bio : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/ezras-life>
The Snowy Day Read Aloud : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/read-aloud/the-snowy-day>
EJK Award Origin : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/about-the-ejk-award>
EJK Foundation Homepage : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org>
De Grummond : <https://www.degrummond.org>
USM Kaigler : <https://www.usm.edu/childrens-book-festival>
EJK 2020 Award Ceremony : <https://youtu.be/fA2HG0fHhfE>
Friends School of Baltimore Paper Ballot : <https://tinyurl.com/uo3y2dl>
Social Media Sign : <https://tinyurl.com/yatd3mqp>
Clip Art PNG Folder : <https://tinyurl.com/ycklduxx>