

Images of Rurality: The Whippoorwill Award for Young Adult Literature and Criteria for Evaluating Depictions of Rural People and Places

Wednesday 4 August 2021 - Parallel Session 3 - 11.30am to 12.30pm (GMT+1)

GRANT - Developing Cultural Responsiveness

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The Whippoorwill Award for Young Adult literature, launched in 2019, celebrates the most distinguished books written for youth that represent the reality of rural places without being overly idealized or taking a deficit perspective. Over the past two years, a diverse collection of texts have been named Whippoorwill winners, including books set in and outside of the United States and written in a variety of genres (fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, poetry) addressing issues including immigration, xenophobia, first love, being transgender, solving a mystery and more in a variety of rural settings. Too often, popular media, including texts written for children, portray rural people and places either as backwards, foolish, and anachronistic or as idyllic places of calm and restoration. Neither captures the rich rurality and complex histories of rural places and people. Winners of the Whippoorwill do not sugar coat the complexities of rural places, but neither do they perpetuate stereotypes or myths. The purpose of this session is both to increase awareness of the Whippoorwill Award and to provide a framework for educators to think about how rural places are portrayed in the texts they share with students. In this session, three members of the Whippoorwill Award Committee will share the criteria used to make decisions about which texts will receive the award and lead a discussion about how educators can use the criteria to select texts for students and help students interrogate the ways that rural places and people are portrayed in the texts they encounter.