2014 Phoenix Picture Book Award

Raymond Briggs for The Bear (Julia Macrae Books, 1994)

Raymond Briggs’s The Bear is delightfully affecting on all sensory levels and leaves one with much to ponder. The entire work is an outstanding example of venturesome creativity evidenced by the surprises of its page-turns, its movement and boundary breaking, its felicitous pauses, and the pitch-perfect dialogue that renders the drama and humour of child-adult and child-bear relations incisively while leaving the open the question of imagination versus reality. Briggs’s captures the ‘I love you’ ‘I hate you’ of a young child as well as other emotions perfectly, especially through facial expressions; his lightly delineated pencil drawings are just right for depicting this memorable encounter. The Bear is a powerful metaphor for the emotional and social complexities and longings of childhood. This engaging and often humorous story, told mostly through the visuals, will never grow old or out-of-date.