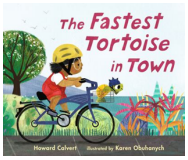
The Sunshine State Young Readers Award Junior Books
2025-2026

Picture Books:



The Fastest Tortoise in Town written by Howard Calvert and illustrated by Karen Obuhanych
Barbara Hendricks, a tortoise, has entered a road race, but what was she thinking? With only a week to go before the big day, she worries that she doesn't stand a chance against the other animals competing. Barbara's friend and owner, Lorraine, inspires her to train a little bit more each day and coaxes her out of her shell when the race day arrives. How intimidating to line up next to the slow loris, the snail, the sloth, and the walrus! But Barbara realizes that if she just tries her best, she's already won.



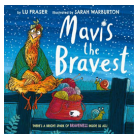
The Quacken written by Justin Colon and Pablo Pino
Lurking in the lake at Cucumonga Campground is a fearsome and frightening creature. Legend says that it swallows kids, canoes, and even whales whole. But all Hector sees are cute, cuddly, quacking ducks. Until he breaks the campground's most important rule--Don't Feed the Ducks--and releases...the Quacken.



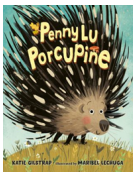
Squirrel-ish written and illustrated by Bambi Edlund
At the park, people give squirrels free peanuts. And nobody screams when a squirrel crosses their path. But for Rat, it's all screams and no nuts ... until he comes up with a plan: be more like a squirrel--squirrel-ish!



We are Definitely Human written and illustrated by X Fang
When three mysterious visitors from "Europe" crash-land in Mr. Li's field, he does what any good host would: he invites them back to his farmhouse and offers to help fix up their "car". No, there's nothing strange about these guests at all. Just like other humans, they "make business", "play sportsball" and "wear hat". As the townsfolk also come to the aid of the visitors and the gathering turns into a little party, interplanetary relations reach an all-time high.



Mavis the Bravest written by Lu Fraser and illustrated by Sarah Warburton
Mavis is not like her adventurous friend Marge. Mavis is a chicken who finds EVERYTHING scary (night-time and daytime and anything hairy!). So when the slumbering peace of their cozy barn is disturbed by someone trying to steal their friend Sandra the sheep, will Mavis be able to find her bright spark of braveness and save Sandra?



Penny Lu Porcupine written by Katie Gilstrap and illustrated by Maribel Lechuga
Like all porcupines, Penny Lu is nearsighted. So while her incredible sense of smell leads her to all sorts of yummy food, predators can be hard to spot. Thankfully, her pointy quills make her look powerful. But sometimes Penny Lu doesn't feel powerful. And she wonders what she'd do if she came face-to-face with the predator she fears the most-THE BEAR!



How This Book Got Red written by Margaret Chiu Greanias and illustrated by Melissa Iwai
When Red discovers a new book about pandas, she can't wait to read it! Except it's about only one kind of panda, and red pandas are completely left out. Red never gets to read stories about pandas like herself! So she decides to take matters into her own paws and write her own book.

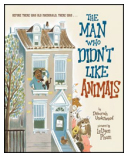


Luigi, the Spider Who Wanted to be a Kitten written by Michelle Knudsen and illustrated by Kevin Hankes
When a lady mistakes him for kitten, big hairy spider Luigi resists her kind advances until tasty breakfasts and getting tucked into bed convince him otherwise, but he soon learns what might be at stake when you pretend to be someone you're not.



The Spotless Giraffe written by Peter Millett and illustrated by Alison Hawkins

In this funny and heartwarming picture book, meet a shy little giraffe named Kipekee. She's a bit different from the other giraffes--she was born with no spots.



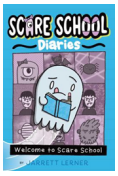
The Man Who Didn't Like Animals written by Deborah Underwood and illustrated by LeUyen Pham

There once was a man who loved his tidy home and who didn't like animals. Then one day, a cat appeared. The man and the cat both liked napping and watching the rain and eating dinner precisely at six. Well, maybe this one animal could stay. Next came a dog . . .

Independent Readers:



Orris and Timble: The Beginning written by Kate DiCamillo and illustrated by Carmen Mok
Orris the rat lives alone in an old barn surrounded by his treasures, until the day his solitude is disrupted by a sudden flutter of wings and a loud screech. A small owl has gotten caught in a trap in the barn. Can Orris 'make the good and noble choice' and rescue the owl, despite the fact that owls and rats are natural enemies? And if he does, will he be ready for the consequences?



Scare School Diaries: Welcome to Scare School written and illustrated by Jarrett Lerner
Bash is a young ghost who has never been good at scaring people is nervous about his first day at scare school, where he will learn to master the necessary skills to become a successful ghost.



Kwame's Magic Quest: Rise of the Green Flame written by Bernard Mensah and illustrated by Natasha Nayo
Eight-year-old Kwame is eager to start Juju School and learn calabash magic, yet none of the teachers can figure out what kind of magic is in his gourd. When one of Kwame's new friends is possessed by an evil magic, its power is revealed.



Disaster Squad: Wildfire Rescue written by Rekha Rajan and illustrated by Courtney Lovett
The Jackson family, including eight-year-old Jaden and his sister Leela, travel the United States responding to disasters, helping people and rescuing animals--but they have never responded to a wildfire like the one raging in Northern California.



George the Flybot and the Lost Camera on Mount Everest by Nessa Bellido Schwarz
Meet George the flybot, a one-of-a-kind robotic fly on his first secret mission! With instructions from Darcy Luna, his boss at Fly on the Wall Inc., George zips off to the Himalayas to search for a camera that went missing during George Mallory's ill-fated 1924 Mount Everest summit attempt. George understands that he might change history by discovering who really conquered Mount Everest. But George has another mission of his own: to learn more about how humans act and feel, and maybe--just maybe--find a friend.