

Washington Children's Choice Picture Book Award 2025-2026 Nominee List

The Bakery Dragon

Author & Illustrator: Deven Elle Kurtz

Summary: Ember, a small dragon with an unimpressive roar, fears he will never be as good at stealing gold as other dragons, but discovers a different path to joy after a chance encounter with a baker.

Buffalo Fluffalo

Author: Bess Kalb

Illustrator: Erin Kraan

Summary: A sweet and silly buffalo who tries to bluff and fluff his way into being bigger than he really is.

Built to Last

Author: Minh Le

Illustrator: Dan Santat

Summary: Every creation two friends build together ends up tumbling down, except their friendship.

Cookie Time

Author & Illustrator: Jessie Sima

Summary: Eager to eat their cookies, siblings Kat and Ari decide to build a time machine, but they soon discover some things are worth waiting for.

A Crocodile Should Never Skip Breakfast

Author & Illustrator: Colleen Larmour

Summary: When Croc sleeps in one morning, he rushes out the door so he won't be late for work--leaving no time to eat breakfast. When he fails to grab a bite before his shift as a ferry boat, his growling hunger starts making his passengers look like tasty treats.

A Flicker of Hope

Author: Cynthia Harmony

Illustrator: Devon Holzwarth

Summary: A story of migration. Told through the parallel stories of the butterflies' journey and Lucia's migrant farmer father, Cynthia Harmony's "A Flicker of Hope" is about the power of families and nature, both of which know no borders.

I Know How To Draw An Owl

Author: Hilary Horder Hippely

Illustrator: Matt James

Summary: A homeless girl, who lives in a car with her mother, draws a lifelike portrait of an owl based on firsthand experience.

I'm Sorry You Got Mad

Author & Illustrator: Kyle Lukoff

Summary: Jack wants to apologize for hurting Zoe's feelings. He just can't seem to find the right words. Turns out there's more to an apology than just saying "I'm sorry."

Jump for Joy

Author: Karen Gray Ruelle

Illustrator: Hadley Hooper

Summary: Wanting a canine companion more than anything in the world, Joy makes dogs out of whatever's at hand--seashells, snow--unaware that her perfect dog friend is closer than she thinks.

Log Life (Tiny Habitats)

Author & Illustrator: Amy Hevron

Summary: A nonfiction picture book that's all about the tiny world of nurse log habitats. Nurse logs are tiny ecosystems with hundreds of rare and important life forms. When old trees fall to the forest floor, they can take centuries to decompose, helping all sorts of organism for hundreds of years. They provide nutrients for tree seedlings, hideaways for small animals, shelters for the winter, and protection from the elements.

The Man Who Didn't Like Animals

Author: Deborah Underwood

Illustrator: LeUyen Pham

Summary: 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.

The Midnight Panther

Author & Illustrator: Poonam Mistry

Summary: In the depths of the rainforest lives a little black panther. He is not like the other cats, with their dazzling spots, bold stripes and golden manes. One night Panther sets off to find where he belongs.

Answering the call of the moonlight, he scales the treetops. Perhaps up among the stars he will discover his own strength and beauty.

My Friend Andy

Author & Illustrator: Emma Chinery

Summary: Fluffy wants to befriend Andy, but his owner never lets them play together. Only after he gets separated from his family at the park is he able to truly interact with his new friend. With the help of Andy and his owner, Fluffy finds his way back home and makes a new best friend in the process.

Narwhal: Unicorn of the Arctic

Author: Candace Fleming

Illustrator: Deena So'Oteh

Summary: When winter ice covers the Arctic Ocean, a narwhal pokes his head through a patch of open water, his tusk, a six-foot long tooth, pointed to the sky. Join this mammal as he jousts with another narwhal, floats with his pod, and uses echolocation to find his prey. When warmer weather arrives, he will migrate towards summer ground. But he must be careful! Predators, orcas, and polar bears will be hungry and looking for a meal ... How will the narwhal escape? Will he be able to return to the winter bay?

Parrotfish Has a Superpower

Author: Jill Esbaum

Illustrator: Bob Shea

Summary: Just wait till you hear what a parrotfish can do! You may know they live in warm tropical waters, have an interesting trick for hiding from predators, and have crazy-incredible teeth. But they also do something that no other fish can do—and Parrotfish is eager to tell you all about it.

Tate's Wild Rescue

Author: Jenny Turnbull

Illustrator: Izzy Burton

Summary: When Tate sends letters to a variety of wild animals offering to be their best friend and protector, none of them accept her proposal, but just as she is about to give up, she receives a letter of her own.

The Teeny, Weeny Unicorn

Author & Illustrator: Shawn Harris

Summary: A teeny-weeny unicorn feels like the world is not made for his small stature and one day it bothers him so much he runs off, but soon after meeting a salty gnome he starts to wonder if he might just be the right size after all.

The Together Tree

Author: Aisha Saeed

Illustrator: LeUyen Pham

Summary: Rumi's family has moved from California to Georgia and he is feeling lonely and left out at school because one of the other kids, Asher, is a bully--until Sebastian joins him, drawing in the dirt under the old willow tree.

Ursula Upside Down

Author & Illustrator: Corey Tabor

Summary: Ursula is a happy catfish, swimming through a shimmering river with weeds waving above and a sky full of scrumptious bugs below. Then one question turns her world upside down. Is left right? Is right wrong? Which way even is up?

We Are Definitely Human

Author & Illustrator: X. Fang

Summary: 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.