

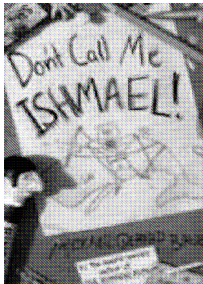
What is the Children's Peace Literature Award, and What's that got to do with Ishmael?

Kate Prescottt

The Children's Peace Literature Award is a biennial Award run by the South Australian chapter of *Psychologists for Peace* (the PFP group in South Australian was founded by an enthusiastic band of interested guidance officers). The award recognizes authors who promote the peaceful resolution of conflict through their work. As our children live in an increasingly threatened world, it is important to present them with constructive alternatives to violence and hostility. We believe that literature has a significant influence on children's attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, we wish to support and encourage authors whose work promotes peace and the understanding of others.

A judging panel of psychologists and children's literature experts read, discuss and rank entries based on their literary merit and their effectiveness in demonstrating a constructive, non-violent approach towards the resolution of conflict. The 2007 award (the eleventh CPLA, the first being awarded in 1997) attracted over 100 entries, from which the panel selected seven books for the final short list.

The 2007 Children's Peace Literature Award was awarded to Michael Gerard Bauer, for his book *Don't Call Me Ishmael*. This novel set in an Australian multicultural city school, is about the challenges, embarrassments, friendships and exploits of young adolescent boys, and has been written with great skill, humour and appeal. It shows the importance of sticking up for your mates and that serious conflict can be resolved by brain-power, thoughtfulness and sensitivity to the position of others rather than through revenge.



The chair of the judging panel (Pru Blaikie) said: *What we were looking for was a book that was both appealing to children, and demonstrated that they can, through their actions, resolve conflicts in positive ways for all involved i.e. a book that children will want to read and which also provides a model on which children can base their own behaviour. This book had it all – it was funny, engaging, well written and the main character, Ishmael, actively chose to behave in ways which would help rather than damage both his friends and his adversary. It was the unanimous and clear choice by all of the eight judges on the panel.*

The panel was also impressed by the quality of the shortlisted books.

- *The Goldseekers* by Greg Bastian (Angus & Robertson)
- *Don't Call me Ishmael* by Michael Gerard Bauer (Omnibus) *The Story of Tom Brennan* by J.C.Burke (Random House)
- *One Whole and Perfect Day* by Judith Clarke (Allen & Unwin)
- *Born to Bake* by Phillip Gwynne (Penguin – Aussie Bites)
- *Lost Property* by James Moloney (Penguin)
- *The Worry Tree* by Marianne Musgrove (Random House)

Further information about the Children's Peace Literature Award, this year's winner and previous winners and short lists can be found at:
<http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/awards/literature/#2007-winner>.

Psychologists For Peace is an Interest Group of the *Australian Psychological Society*. Its members are psychologists, and others, who are concerned about the prevalence of war and conflict in our world and are interested in applying their professional skills to issues relating to promoting peace and preventing war. We are working to promote peace in the world and prevent conflict through psychological research, education and advocacy. PFP has active groups in most states. Although PFP is an interest group of the APS individuals who are not members of the APS are welcome to join. Details can be found through the above web address.