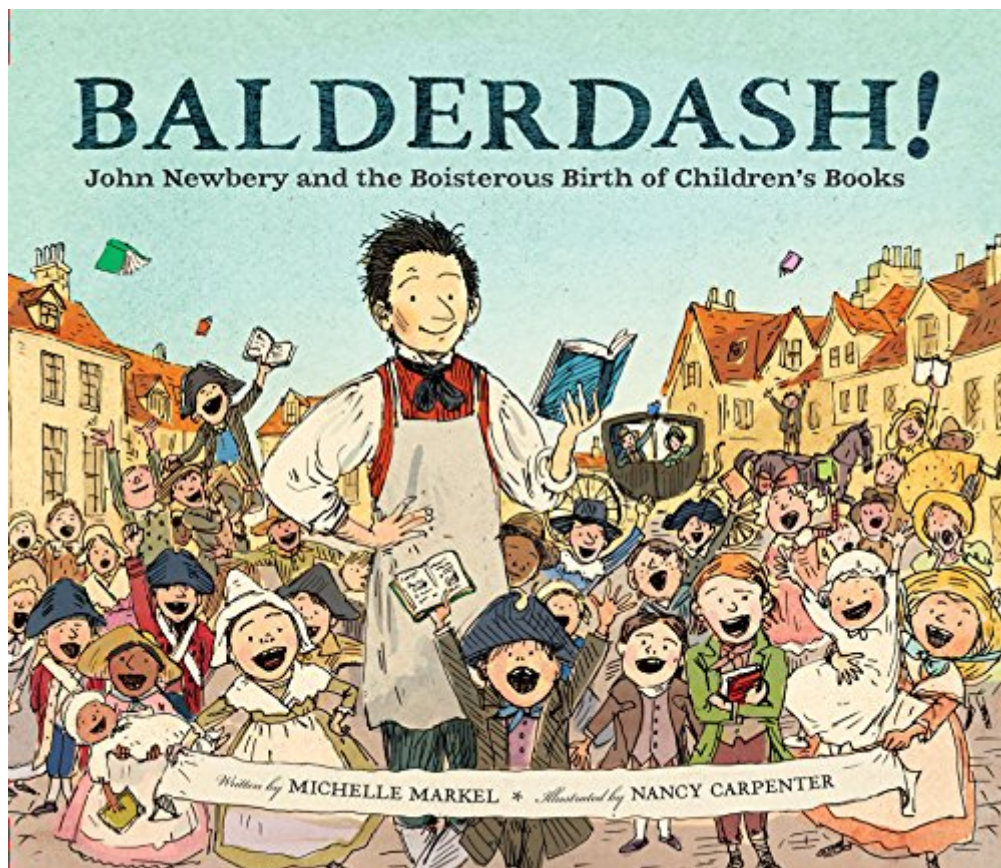


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Balderdash!: John Newbery And The Boisterous Birth Of Children's Books



Synopsis

This rollicking and fascinating picture book biography chronicles the life of the first pioneer of children's books—John Newbery himself. While most children's books in the 18th century contained lessons and rules, John Newbery imagined them overflowing with entertaining stories, science, and games. He believed that every book should be made for the reader's enjoyment. Newbery—“for whom the prestigious Newbery Medal is named”—became a celebrated author and publisher, changing the world of children's books forever. This book about his life and legacy is as full of energy and delight as any young reader could wish.

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Customer Reviews

We checked this out of the library but then bought it we enjoyed it so much. Markel's writing style is definitely engaging and the different size and fonts of the writing makes the story feel more lively as well. I have read many Newberry winning books over the years but I am ashamed to say that I never thought much about the man himself. My daughter and I loved learning about his life. He sounds like quite a clever businessman really. The illustrations in this book are also impeccable, just the kind we love with so much going on and so much to discover in each scene. My daughter and I enjoyed the

street scenes early in the book that showed people from many walks of life reading. We hunted for the children in the scenes who looked sad and bored presumably because they did not have a book in their hands! Fun! Also the title of the book was a new word for my daughter and she enjoyed shouting it like the children in the story! Balderdash is shouted in response to the idea that reading books would turn children into wild beasts! I also enjoyed learning that the phrase "goody two-shoes" originated from Newbery's first novel published for children. The novel and its plot are mentioned in the story but in the end pages of the book we learn even more about the phrase "goody two-shoes." The little girl was an orphan with only one shoe. A kind person gave her new shoes and she went about showing everyone she met her two shoes. Then through "study, hard work, and kindness" she bettered her situation and ends up falling in love and marrying a rich squire. Interesting. Of course, times have changed so rising in society by hard work so you can marry a rich man does not quite resonant the way it did in 1765! Still interesting to learn the origin of that phrase. Altogether we were quite taken with the history book! Beautiful, engaging, educational, and fun! Yeah!

This picture book biography is the story of John Newbery, the man who first created books for children in the 18th century. Books were popular in London at the time, but all of the fun books were for adults. Children had to read poems and fables that were dull and taught them about social niceties. John Newbery grew up to be a publisher and realized that children needed different books. He created a book that was filled with fantasy and games and then he made it very attractive and paired it with a toy. Next came a magazine for children and eventually a novel. The books were written anonymously but all were sold and printed by Newbery himself, the man who created children's literature. Markel has captured the feel of the creativity and wildness of someone who decided to make a major change in the world. The text here is celebratory of the new discoveries and new chances being taken in books. Markel points out all of the positives about Newbery's book and avoids noting that his books don't bear any resemblance to children's books of today. Rather, the focus is on the invention, the cleverness of the marketing and the popularity of children's books from the very beginning. Carpenter's illustrations are filled with pizzazz. They have a great energy about them, depicting the bustling streets of London, the desirability of the books, and even showing sad children with real humor. She uses slightly turned pages to show other images underneath along with speech bubbles. The text of the book is also playful, moving through different fonts and text sizes for emphasis. A glimpse of the earliest children's books, this historical picture book biography is a pleasure just as Newbery's were. Appropriate for ages 6-9.

With the mountain of great children's books to choose from these days, one could be forgiven for imagining children's publishing has been around as long as adult books have been available for the masses. But it wasn't until John Newbery (the man the Newbery Award is named for) became a publisher in the mid-1700s that books children could read for fun came along. Before that, children were expected to read preachy poems and manuals with lots of rules on how to conduct themselves. Newbery's life and the influence he had is told, fittingly, in a picture book by Michelle Markel called *Balderdash! John Newbery and the Boisterous Birth of Children's Books*. The cover sets the tone for the story, with an aproned Newberry holding an open book surrounded by cheering children, many also holding books. The tone throughout the book is playful and irreverent, which is how many in Newbery's time saw him. But children loved the books he published, which were small and pretty. Some even came with a toy. It is believed that Newbery wrote many of the titles he published, but the author was officially anonymous. *Balderdash!* ends with a short bio of the man, more about the books he published, and references for further reading. Book lovers of all ages will enjoy reading about this man who is so important to the emergence of good literature just for children. The publisher provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

I never knew anything about Newbery beyond the shiny sticker that appears on children's books. The telling is lively and entertaining, and the illustrations and graphic design are totally engaging. Learning how the field of children's literature came to be is fascinating. This book is everything a children's book should be! Newbery would have loved it!

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