

# Fact Sheet: Ezra Jack Keats and his Books



## Biographical Notes

- Jacob “Jack” Ezra Katz born March 11, 1916, to Polish Jewish parents in East New York, Brooklyn
- Aspired to be an artist from early childhood, despite a lack of encouragement
- Won a national student competition run by Scholastic for the painting Shantytown, 1934
- Father’s death, 1935, meant turning down art school for paid work; jobs included WPA muralist and comic book colorist, 1935–1943
- After serving in World War II, changed name to Ezra Jack Keats, 1947
- Studied painting in Paris, 1949
- Career as an illustrator for books, magazines and advertising; exhibited at Associated American Artists gallery, 1950 and 1954
- First children’s book illustrated, 1954; illustrated some 85 books throughout his career
- Co-wrote his first book, 1960
- Wrote and illustrated *The Snowy Day*, 1962; awarded the Caldecott Medal, 1963
- Established the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, 1964
- Wrote and illustrated a total of 22 published children’s books
- Died 1983



## Books & Awards

### Books Written & Illustrated by Keats

My Dog Is Lost! (Mi Perro Se Ha Perdido!)

co-author Pat Cherr, 1960

The Snowy Day, 1962

- Caldecott Medal, 1963
- Venice Film Festival Lion of Saint Mark Award, for best short film for children, 1965
- New York Public Library's 150 most influential books of the 20th century, 1996

Whistle for Willie, 1964

John Henry, An American Legend, 1965

Jennie's Hat, 1966

- Children's Book of the Year, 1986

Peter's Chair, 1967

A Letter to Amy, 1968

- Children's Book of the Year, 1968

Goggles! 1969

- Children's Book of the Year, 1969
- Caldecott Medal Honor Book, 1970

Hi, Cat! 1970

- Horn Book Award for illustration, 1970
- Children's Book of the Year

Apt. 3, 1971

- School Library Journal's Best Books, 1971
- Children's Book of the Year, 1971, 1986

Pet Show! 1972

- Children's Book of the Year

Skates!, 1973

Psst! Doggie-, 1973

Dreams, 1974

- Children's Book of the Year

Kitten for a Day, 1974

Louie, 1975

- Children's Book of the Year

The Trip, 1978

- Children's Choices Award, 1977

Maggie and the Pirate, 1979

Louie's Search, 1980

Regards to the Man in the Moon, 1981

Clementina's Cactus, 1982

Regards to the Man in the Moon, 1987

- Children's Book of the Year

Posthumous:

One Red Sun, 1998

Keats's Neighborhood, 2002

### Select Books Illustrated by Keats

In a Spring Garden, 1965

- Library of Congress Books of the Year, 1965

The Little Drummer Boy, 1968

Over in the Meadow, 1972

- Children's Book of the Year



## Personal Honors

- Invited to design UNICEF's first greeting cards (theme: peace), 1966; 1 million+ sets sold
- Member of White House Forum on Child Development and the Mass Media, 1970
- Guest on "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" four times, 1971–1974
- University of Southern Mississippi, Silver Medallion for Outstanding Service in the Field of Children's Literature, 1980
- Keats Archives established at the University of Southern Mississippi, 1985
- American Library Association, Posthumous Honoree for Outstanding Advocacy for Libraries in the 20th Century, 2000
- Society of Illustrators, Posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award, 2006
- Inducted into the New York State Writers Hall of Fame by Empire State Center for the Book and the Empire State Book Festival, 2015
- Bronze statue of Peter and Willie, a storytelling site in the Imagination Playground of Prospect Park, dedicated 1997; to be designated a Literary Landmark, 2016

## Awards Endowed by the Keats Foundation

- UNICEF Ezra Jack Keats International Award for Excellence in Children's Book Illustration, 1985-1994
- Ezra Jack Keats Book Award, New Writer, 1986; New Illustrator, 2001; Honor Books, 2012
- Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition, 1986
- Ezra Jack Keats Mini-Grants, 1986

## Select Biographies

- Ezra Jack Keats, Art and Picture Book Maker, 1994; and Ezra Jack Keats: A Bibliography and Catalogue, 1996; by Brian Alderson, Pelican Press
- Ezra Jack Keats, A Biography with Illustrations, by Dean Engel and Florence Freedman, Silver Moon Press, 1995
- Ezra Jack Keats, The Art of People and Place, DVD, 2009
- The Snowy Day and the Art of Ezra Jack Keats, by Claudia J. Nahson, Jewish Museum and Yale University Press, 2011