

Virtual Mock Ezra Jack Keats Award Lesson Plans & Materials



This kit was designed in response to the COVID-19 crisis, but may be useful well beyond. As we are all in discovery mode, we have included many thoughts and suggestions. Ideas include Read Alouds using scanned books and using Chats or reactions in programs like Zoom, depending on your group's ages. Please email us your additional ideas so that we can collect and share them with those who sign up. The information included here is the same as the in-person plan, so that you can use it independently.

The materials in this kit were developed in collaboration with teachers from **Friends School of Baltimore** and by librarians and teachers in New York, NY and Stamford, CT.

Special thanks to John Scott, Andy Hanes, Mary Kelley, Frances Morrissey and Diana White from Friends, to Chris Carter, Teacher, NYC Department of Education, and to Caroline Ward, Youth Literature Consultant, for their creativity, commitment to advancing the appreciation of diverse children's literature in the classroom, for sharing their expertise and for making this toolkit possible.



Dear Friends,

The **Virtual Mock EJK Award Toolkit** is based upon the real Ezra Jack Keats Award. The EJK Award honors outstanding authors and illustrators whose books, in the spirit of Keats, celebrate the diversity of our culture and depict children from the widest spectrum of ethnic groups and around the world.

The **Virtual Mock EJK Award** is a group activity that can be adapted for children in grades K - 12. In this remote program we expect that everyone may read or possibly hear books read, then will discuss and evaluate a selection of books eligible for the Award in order to make a group decision about what books most successfully meet the criteria you and your students have created for your award.

There are many reasons to run a virtual learning program and we expect such programs to become more common in the years to come. But right now many of us have been thrust into a sudden need to translate all that we have taught in person, to teaching remotely. We've designed this toolkit to meet the needs of the newcomer, as well as the expert, including what you will need to guide your group through this remote module over the course of the school year.

Each step of the process is designed for virtual learning conditions with suggestions for ways in which you can mold the program to fit your needs and resources. We hope you'll be our partners as we explore and refine the ways in which the Virtual Mock EJK can help you enhance your group's sense of community, as well as develop their reading, comprehension and communication skills.

Subjects Covered in this kit include:

- ▶ A suggested **process** and **lesson plans** to run your Mock EJK Award
- ▶ A **timeline** based on a typical academic calendar
- ▶ Sample **criteria** and a sample **voting** process
- ▶ Ideas for producing your remote **Award Ceremony**
- ▶ **Background materials** about Ezra Jack Keats
- ▶ An outline of the **real EJK Award** process
- ▶ **Art project ideas** and clip art to use with your group
- ▶ Sample **social media** posts and graphics

As mentioned above, this toolkit is adapted from a number of actual in-person Mock EJK Award programs. Please feel free to modify it to best serve your remote needs. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and feedback. Please send any thoughts to jmccarthy@ezra-jack-keats.org.

Deborah Pope, PhD
Executive Director, EJK Foundation

Introduction

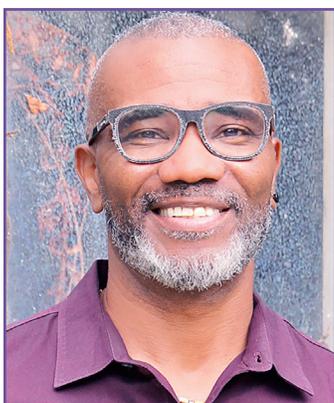


Your Virtual Mock EJK Award Toolkit!

The process and timeline provided for your **Virtual Mock EJK Award** project are based on the timing of the actual EJK Award.

- ▶ Initial prep can be done in the fall.
- ▶ The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation will share a list of eligible books for the actual EJK Award in advance.
- ▶ From this list, choose the books your group will consider for your Virtual Mock EJK Award winner and honorees.
- ▶ If possible, plan your Virtual Mock EJK Award to coincide with the real EJK Award process from January - March.

Basic components of the program include close reading of the texts, student discussion facilitated by the leaders, and finally the successful agreement on what books best fit the criteria to receive the award.



"As I read, I often found myself asking: What Would Keats Do? I don't know if I ever found an answer to that question, but I treasured the time I spent reading books and posing that question to myself."

- Don Tate

Author, Illustrator
Keats Award Winner and Honoree

What are the benefits of running a Virtual Mock EJK Award?

- ▶ Sharpen critical reading skills, refine verbal communication and build visual literacy.
- ▶ Improve social interaction and strengthen a sense of community between children and their school or library, especially important when teaching remotely.
- ▶ Increase cross curricular connections and opportunities to involve colleagues in your program.
- ▶ Create opportunities for children to make personal connections between literature and real life.
- ▶ Encourage children to become familiar with people and places that may be new to them.
- ▶ Inspire children to become more aware of being agents for social and/or personal change.
- ▶ Provide an opportunity to discuss the importance of diversity and equity in literature and in life, which can help to:
 - ▶ Let children express their desire to see diversity in the books they read.
 - ▶ Increase their vocabulary related to diversity.
- ▶ Enhance younger children's ability to use math skills in the real world (involve in tallying your votes).

What is needed to run a Virtual Mock EJK Award?

- ▶ The actual books or e-books.
- ▶ A working partnership with caregivers of young children, if this is the age group you are working with.
- ▶ A collaborative community of colleagues, administrators, families, and caregivers to support and encourage those leading and participating in the program.
- ▶ Ability to brainstorm solutions to new challenges.

How can the Virtual Mock EJK Award Process be adapted & adjusted for children of all ages?

- ▶ Younger children
 - ▶ Often depend on illustrations for the storyline, but can then be guided into in-depth discussions of a book's meaning.
 - ▶ Might be better able to judge a smaller number of books than older kids.
 - ▶ Can share thoughts in discussions, with a caregiver or an appointed "buddy".
- ▶ Older kids
 - ▶ Can engage in more independent analytical discussion of image and text.
 - ▶ Might serve as mentors to younger children.
 - ▶ Can create their own online discussion groups to evaluate the books.

Read on!

September-December Preliminary Activities



There is much you can do during the fall semester to prepare and build excitement with your students, your school or library, or with your community.

Sign-up

Let the EJK Foundation (EJKF) know you will be conducting a Virtual Mock EJK Award. Go to this link (<https://tinyurl.com/vywdpl3>) to sign up, receive updates about the Virtual Mock EJK Awards as well as our suggested eligible booklist. We will also connect you with others doing a Mock.

Select & Obtain Your Books

- ▶ Choose your books from the eligible list offered.
- ▶ Decide how many books to include in your Virtual Mock EJK based on reading levels, time and budget.
- ▶ Check online and your local library to find digital copies or read alouds of your selected books.
- ▶ Find out if your institution or an auxiliary organization (i.e. a PTA) can fund the purchase of your books.
- ▶ Check with book publishers for permission to record read alouds for your group to access.
- ▶ Obtain permission from publishers to make your own Read Alouds, if necessary. Check this link for info. <https://tinyurl.com/sz9jgoc>.
- ▶ Contact the EJKF for more ideas about funding.

Prepare for Your Virtual Program

- ▶ Make a plan with the children and/or caregivers to document the process with photographs and screen shots.
- ▶ Get signed releases if you don't already have them.
- ▶ Video your own Read Alouds and identify a secure place online to store them so your group can access them.

Materials to Create Art

- ▶ Create electronic slides using the clip art included in this toolkit to promote or "advertise" your program within your institution and with your colleagues.
- ▶ Share the actual **EJK Award poster** with your students on screen and discuss some of the books they recognize. (<https://tinyurl.com/rsz4269>).
- ▶ Check out this **Mock EJK Award Medal** that we have created for your use. You're welcome to use the clip art file provided and add in your school, library or group name. Send it to children for them to create a poster or other artwork to hang in their homes to heighten their excitement and sense of participation. 
- ▶ Children can also create a poster of their favorite books and/or characters.
- ▶ Brainstorm additional art projects with them.

ezra-jack-keats.org

Design Your Award Ceremony

We suggest a few *preliminary* plans to start. A more detailed section on page 7 delves into ceremony logistics

- ▶ **Set the Date:** The real EJK Awards are announced the first Tuesday of March so you may want to plan your online ceremony to correspond with that date.
- ▶ **Invite Speakers:** Use this opportunity to build and strengthen your school or library community. Put the date on their calendars early and keep in touch with them to build anticipation. Consider having the children extend the invitations. Invites may include:
 - ▶ Your supervisor or principal to host or speak.
 - ▶ Your colleagues
 - ▶ School administrators
- ▶ **The EJK Foundation Participation:** If you'd like to invite Deborah Pope, Executive Director of EJKF, to participate in your remote ceremony, please email Jocelyn McCarthy by December 1st. Dr. Pope will let you know if she or another member of the EJK Award Committee can attend.
- ▶ **Notify the Winners and Honorees:** Let your students know that after their award ceremony you may write to the authors and illustrators to let them know they've won a Virtual Mock EJK Award! (Prepare them for not hearing back from either).



Virtual Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans & Materials

January: Stock Up, Discuss Process, Read, Deliberate



A review of the program, its goals, and processes with your group, is a great way to begin the New Year. Discussion points are provided for each of the following sections:

- ▶ Your Book Selection
- ▶ Your Criteria and How To Apply It
- ▶ Reading and Discussing Submitted Books
- ▶ Your Nominating and Voting Methodology
- ▶ How You Will Announce and Celebrate the Winners

We also suggest referring to:

- ▶ Friends School of Baltimore Criteria (This Page)
- ▶ About Ezra and His Books (Page 5)
- ▶ The real EJK Award (Page 6)

Friends School of Baltimore Criteria

▶ **Childhood:** Where did we see childhood in this book? How did the author address childhood in the text? The illustrations? What are the messages about childhood? How did you see yourself and your childhood in the book?

▶ **Family:** What's being celebrated about family? What are things that are similar/different from your family? What message about family does this book send?

▶ **Diversity:** The FSB leaves this topic very open to the children's interpretation. One student brought up biodiversity. Questions you might consider are – What do you think diversity means and how is it a topic that is presented in the books you're reading? How do you see or define diversity?

▶ **Words and pictures go together:** Do they do this well? Can you identify pages in which this works really well? How are the two related? Are they telling a complementary story?

▶ **Excites your brain:** When you read the book can you not wait to get to the next page? How did it excite your brain?

▶ **Hugs your heart:** You may want to talk about the fact that your heart feels lots of different things and ask such questions as – How does it hit your heart? How did it make you feel? Does it remind you of something special?

▶ **Makes you want to learn:** What does this book inspire you to find out more about? Does it excite you to read more books? If the children aren't readers yet you may ask – What did you enjoy about this book? Might you like to read another like it?

▶ **Social and Personal Change:** Did the book help you to learn more about your community, the people around you, yourself?

Your Book Selection

Depending on whether you are presenting your books on a Google Classroom or other remote site, this is a great opportunity to discuss the huge variety of children's books published each year from fiction and nonfiction to fantasy and poetry

- ▶ Talk about how the books being considered were chosen.
- ▶ Tell them how many books they will read or hear read.
- ▶ Let them know that they may be examining some of the same books as the real EJK Award Committee, but set expectations by letting them know that they may not select the same award and honor books.

Your Criteria & How To Apply It In Discussions

Leading your group in this most critical aspect of your Mock EJK Awards is essential to your success.

- ▶ Feel free to use or adapt the **Friends School of Baltimore** criteria depending on your group. Consider speaking about what "In the spirit of Keats..." means. We have provided you with a slide of the criteria to download and use in your virtual presentations (<https://tinyurl.com/y83qxgpz>).
- ▶ Review info about Ezra Jack Keats' life (See Page 5) and most importantly his work as a way to immerse your group in the neighborhood that he created for Peter and his friends (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/ezras-life>).
- ▶ Let your group know the difference between the "real" criteria (See page 6) and the criteria they're using.
- ▶ Suggest that children print out the criteria if possible, for easy reference during the project. You can also point out the keywords on your criteria slide.
- ▶ Describe how they will analyze, evaluate and compare the text and illustrations in each book, in comparison to the other books and in relation to the criteria.
- ▶ If possible, show on screen and evaluate past winners and honor books. This exercise can illustrate the difference between the two categories. It can also help build a connection between their decisions and those of the EJK Award judges.

Virtual Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans & Materials

January: continued



Ezra Jack Keats and the EJK Award

Ezra Jack Keats (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/ezras-life>) was an award-winning author and illustrator of books for children. Many of Ezra's stories are about a group of friends growing up in the city, like where Ezra grew up in Brooklyn, NY.

Ezra's Book *The Snowy Day*

If you haven't ever read *The Snowy Day*, go to the EJK Foundation website to see and listen to a wonderful animated Read Aloud version of the book. Uniquely, all of the voices and the sound track were performed and read by one individual, Napoleon Maddox. (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/read-aloud/the-snowy-day>)

What is the Origin of the EJK Award?

In 1984, a New York Public Librarian, Hannah Nuba, decided there should be a children's book award that encourages and celebrates the creation of books that reflect different ethnicities and cultures, and models kindness and empathy. Knowing Ezra's books, she proposed the creation of the award to Martin and Lillie Pope, the heads of the EJK Foundation at the time. The Award was established and has been bestowed since 1986. (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/about-the-ejk-award>)

Why is the EJK Award Unique?

The EJK Award honors outstanding authors and illustrators whose books, in the spirit of Keats, celebrate the diversity of our culture, and depict children from the widest spectrum of ethnic groups and from around the world. It recognizes new talent, having identified early career authors and illustrators, many of whom have become today's most popular makers of children's books.

Who Produces the EJK Award?

The EJK Foundation and the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi, are proud to work together to produce the EJK Award, which has the most diverse group of winners and honorees of any children's book award, as well as the most ethnically balanced group of book characters. (<https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org>) (<https://www.degrummond.org>)

When is the Award Given?

The award ceremony takes place every April, with over 500 teachers, librarians and literature scholars in attendance, during the Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. (<https://www.usm.edu/childrens-book-festival>)

To view the 2020 Virtual Award Ceremony go to: <https://youtu.be/fA2HG0fHhf>

Reading & Discussing Eligible Books

- ▶ Decide **how many remote sessions** you will have throughout your process to read books together - once or twice a week for two/three weeks might be reasonable. Remind them how many specific books you will be able to read and discuss during each session. This will depend on the allotted time and the age of the children.
- ▶ Let children know if they will have an opportunity to read the books on their own. Tell them if you'll provide video recordings for them to listen to and see the illustrations. (See page 3: Select and Obtain Your Books).
- ▶ Discuss the schedule as well as how and when the winners will be announced.

Guided Reading Ideas

The way you conduct your guided readings will be based on the online platform you use.

- ▶ **Read Alouds:** Introduce books as titles they will be voting on, read the book(s) aloud or through video tapes, and facilitate discussion including going over your selected criteria in-depth.
- ▶ **Show Illustrations:** Show covers or pages of each book on the screen for read alouds to inspire children to see a book in a different way.
- ▶ **Nominated Books Basket:** If possible, provide a virtual basket of the video book recordings for children to access independently.
- ▶ **Quiet Reading Time:** Ask caregivers to find a dedicated time for younger children to read, reread and view the recorded (digital) books everyday.
- ▶ **Discussion Time:** Suggest at-home reads and discussions with families as learning opportunities. Let caregivers know how beneficial it will be to read with the children.
- ▶ **Breakout Sessions & Buddy Systems:** Depending on the program you're using, older children might be able to participate in virtual breakout sessions to ponder specific questions or books with peers. Younger children can have brief discussions about a given book and question with an assigned "reading buddy" in between virtual sessions.



"When judging the books, never fall in love with your book selections. It is most embarrassing when the committee sees you crying (or sighing) when your book is not selected. Always, keep smiling."

- Claudette McLinn
Executive Director
Center for the Study of
Multicultural Children's Literature

Virtual Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans & Materials

January & February



The Real Ezra Jack Keats Award

We are proud to share our process so that everyone holding a Virtual Mock EJK Award can make their experience "real" too.

EJK Award Criteria: The Award is given annually to a new writer and a new illustrator for a picture book that:

- ▶ Highlights the universal qualities of childhood and the strength of the family.
- ▶ Reflects the multicultural nature of our world.
- ▶ Has an original text and original story (no folktales).
- ▶ Unifies illustrations and text.
- ▶ Avoids stereotypes
- ▶ Highlights a child's freedom to be who they want to be or what they want to be.
- ▶ Is respectful of the reader's intelligence, sensitivity, curiosity, and love of learning.
- ▶ Demonstrate excellent command of the chosen medium
- ▶ Displays freshness and originality of language and literary expression.

EJK Award Eligibility: Authors or illustrators may have no more than three books published. Books must be published in North America in the English language. Self-published books are not eligible.

EJK Award Selection Committee: The Committee is composed of nine people and includes illustrators, authors, librarians, early childhood educators, book reviewers, literary critics, and members of major professional organizations.

Timeline for the Real EJK Awards

February to December: Book Selection

- ▶ Publishers submit books for consideration to each committee member (approximately 360 books)
- ▶ Committee members read every book and choose five books to be considered for the Writer Award and five for the Illustrator Award

January/February: Deliberations and Final Plans

- ▶ The Committee deliberates for two days
- ▶ The Committee chooses the winners and honorees
- ▶ Publishers, winners and honorees are notified

March: Winners and Honorees Announced the First Tuesday in March

- ▶ Writers and illustrators can tell all their friends!
- ▶ Publishers order EJK Award medallions to put on the covers of the winning and honoree books

Many EJK Award and Honor winners, whether authors and illustrators, have gone on to write and illustrate many more books and win additional awards. They've also been able to earn a living doing something they love, which is a big award in itself.

Your Nominating and Voting Methodology

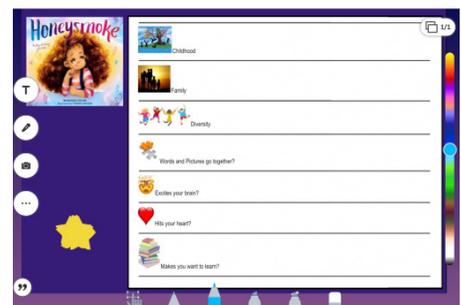
This is a critical phase of the Award process - one that the real EJK Award Committee takes very seriously. We hope your students will too! Below are some ways to organize your virtual voting.

- ▶ **Voting Process:** Explain the nominating and voting process to your group and discuss how long they will have to make a decision. A third grade class in Stamford encouraged each child to make notes on eligible books as they read them. This helped them focus as they began voting.
- ▶ **Final Submissions:** As discussion of the books progresses and everyone agrees on which books to eliminate, remove those books that are clearly no longer in the running. In Stamford they selected a dozen books to discuss and narrowed the finalists down to five. The Friends Baltimore School narrowed their original list down to a dozen finalists.
- ▶ **Final Voting Schedule:** If you conduct voting several times throughout your process, you may have your group schedule **final voting** at the end of February. Some like to wait to announce their winner and honoree until the Award Ceremony.

Decide if you will use an electronic platform for nominating & voting and if so which one.

- ▶ **Vote On-line:** Some schools have access to and use Seesaw or another **electronic portfolio system**. In this case, students can not only cast ballots, but with the guidance of a leader and depending on which system you use, they can discuss and record the reasoning behind their votes. Seesaw allows groups to capture audio explanations and rationale for individuals' choices.
- ▶ **Vote By Overall Book:** One simple remote method for younger grades might be to **call out each book individually** and ask the children to raise their hand if they feel the whole book (story, text and illustrations) is the strongest and merits their vote. You may want to share an image of the book cover and they can choose a reaction such as a thumbs up or clapping.
- ▶ **Vote By Criteria:** One idea appropriate for all age groups is to create and then ask them to vote using an **online ballot** that shows each book cover and each of the criteria you have selected. Each voter can select their chosen title for each of the criteria. (<https://tinyurl.com/uo3y2dl>)

Please email us at jmccarthy@ezra-jack-keats.org to let us know of other tools we might be able to share in future versions of this toolkit.



Virtual Mock EJK Award: Lesson Plans & Materials

February & March



February: Final Planning For Your Ceremony

- ▶ **Finalize the Date for your Event:** Let everyone know so that they can schedule to tune in!
- ▶ **Confirm Your Special Guests and Speakers:** Follow-up with confirmed guests and speakers to be your host, your award presenter(s) and to fill other roles at your event.
- ▶ **Create a Run of Show:** This document may include a list of school, library or other officials attending, but most importantly it will detail the timing of your ceremony and how it will progress from speaker to speaker.

Remember that since this will be a digital event, you will need to have your visual such as slides completely ready for the presentation and brevity will be important.

A sample schedule:

- * **9:55 am:** Special guests sign-in to your online platform.
 - * **10 am:** Children and families enter your digital room.
 - * **10:05: Event Begins:** Group leader welcomes everyone and gives introductory remarks about the process & results.
 - * **10:10:** Group leader introduces honored guest
 - * **10:13:** Guest welcomes everyone, says how proud they are to be there, intros the person to present the honoree(s), etc.
- ▶ **Draft Remarks** Based upon the final Run of Show, draft your remarks including a brief introduction of the award, your process, your criteria, how many great discussions and how much fun you had, and the announcement of your Honor Books and the Winner of your Mock EJK Book Award!

Decorations for Your Virtual Ceremony

Collect and create any special items you might want to show on the screen such as the books or copies of items individuals may have made. These may include:

- ▶ A **Mock EJK Award slide** of your winners and honorees using your Mock EJK medallion
- ▶ A **2020 EJK Award Poster** downloaded from the EJK Foundation website
- ▶ Materials created and sent in by participants
- ▶ [Your Group's Name] Mock EJK Award Medallion

March: "Real" & Mock EJK Award Ceremonies

EJK Award Announcement

Check out the EJK Foundation website on the **first Tuesday of March** to find out the new winners and honorees. If you inform the EJK Foundation about your groups' winners, they will let the Selection Committee know.

A Few Days Before Your Award Ceremony

Make final plans

- ▶ Review your **Run of Show**.
- ▶ Update and **finalize all remarks**. Send them to your **confirmed speakers** with a link to your live ceremony.
- ▶ Schedule on the platform you are using for your ceremony and send a link to the group and any others attending.

Day of Your Ceremony

- ▶ Make sure you have all of your **visuals and slides** prepared for your virtual presentation.
- ▶ Send a **reminder** to your speakers with a copy of the final script and the link to your online ceremony.

Plan Local Publicity & Post on Social Media

We suggest announcing your Mock EJK Award publicly. Depending on whether you are in a school, library or other type of community, consider sharing your process and celebration with your school board or education department, your library leadership, your local newspaper or even a local television station. **This is exactly the type of human interest story local stations love to report on!** Also look for social media tips on Page 8.

Celebrate the entire group for undertaking and succeeding at such a thoughtful and fun process



"...seeing picture books through someone else's eyes makes books, and the world, even richer."
- Melissa Sweet
Author, Illustrator

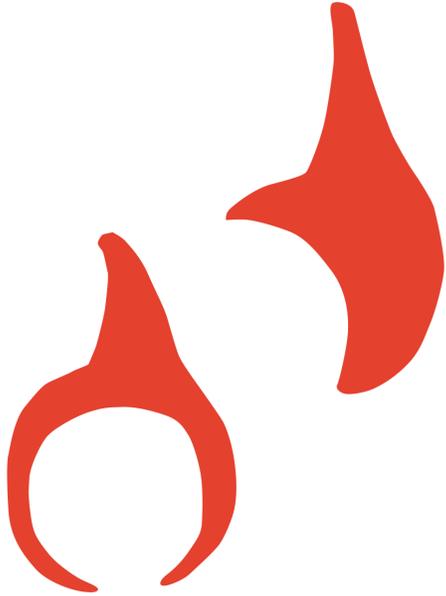
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Clip Art Sample Printables



Printable PNG files are available at <https://tinyurl.com/ycklduxx>.

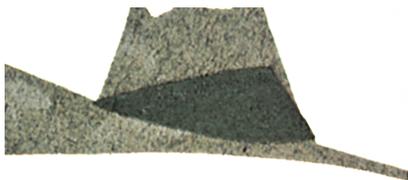
Peter - *The Snowy Day*



Amy - *A Letter to Amy*



Willie - *Whistle for Willie*



Cat - *Hi Cat!*





Bibliography

- Mock EJK Award Sign Up Form : <https://tinyurl.com/vywdpl3>
- Publisher Permission Information : <https://tinyurl.com/sz9jgoc>
- Updated Publisher Permission Information : <https://tinyurl.com/ybwxxfmd>
- EJK Award Poster : <https://tinyurl.com/rsz4269>
- EJK Mock Medallion : <https://tinyurl.com/y8neqgjm>
- Friends School of Baltimore criteria slides : <https://tinyurl.com/y83qxgpz>
- Ezra Jack Keats' Bio : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/ezras-life>
- The Snowy Day Read Aloud : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/read-aloud/the-snowy-day>
- EJK Award Origin : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/about-the-ejk-award>
- EJK Foundation Homepage : <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org>
- De Grummond : <https://www.degrummond.org>
- USM Kaigler : <https://www.usm.edu/childrens-book-festival>
- EJK 2020 Award Ceremony : <https://youtu.be/fA2HG0fHhfE>
- Friends School of Baltimore Paper Ballot : <https://tinyurl.com/uo3y2dl>
- Social Media Sign : <https://tinyurl.com/yatd3mqp>
- Clip Art PNG Folder : <https://tinyurl.com/ycklduxx>