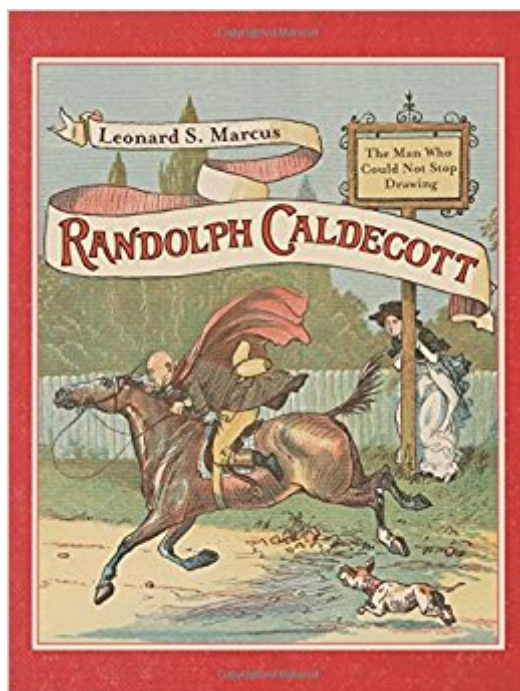


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# Randolph Caldecott: The Man Who Could Not Stop Drawing



## Synopsis

Randolph Caldecott is best known as the namesake of the award that honors picture book illustrations, and in this inventive biography, leading children's literature scholar Leonard Marcus examines the man behind the medal. In an era when the steam engine fueled an industrial revolution and train travel exploded people's experience of space and time, Caldecott was inspired by his surroundings to capture action, movement, and speed in a way that had never before been seen in children's picture books. Thoroughly researched and featuring extensive archival material and a treasure trove of previously unpublished drawings, including some from Caldecott's very last sketchbook, Leonard Marcus's luminous biography shows why Caldecott was indeed the father of the modern picture book and how his influence lives on in the books we love today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 6 Up-Marcus has sifted through a variety of archival collections to find fresh material by and about the celebrated 19th-century British illustrator. Opening with an arresting self-portrait, the volume chronicles Caldecott's birth, rise in British social circles, travels, publications, marriage, and untimely death. The book is handsomely designed with a jacket bordered in the burnt sienna favored by Caldecott. Endpapers are decorated with cameos; thick, cream-colored paper lends richness. Marcus skillfully places his subject in historical context, weaving in such concepts as the impact of the advent of the train on the artist's energetic style and the influence of contemporaries (Turner, Whistler, Tenniel). He wonders, convincingly, if Caldecott had seen Muybridge's photographs proving that horses run with all four legs in the air-and if they inspired his depiction of

John Gilpin's galloping horse that graces the Caldecott Medal. Art and quotations bolster the narrative, building the character of a complex man and ultimately detailing his contributions to picture-book design. The question of audience arises. With a trim size comparable to a portrait-style picture book, a page count of 64, and examples with clear child appeal, this is not pitched to academics. Yet, its scrupulous documentation, thorough back matter, and sophisticated language, e.g., "The epicenter of England's burgeoning textile industry, Manchester was a new kind of city," indicate it is also not for casual, child readers. It will be a delight for picture-book enthusiasts and a provocative introduction for those who want the backstory of the man behind the medal.-Wendy Lukehart, District of Columbia Public Library (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

**\*Starred Review\*** Published in time for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Caldecott Medal is Marcus's lavishly illustrated biography of the man for whom the award is named. Caldecott, "the man who could not stop drawing," was born on March 22, 1846, in Chester, England. He began drawing when he was six, but his first jobs were not as an illustrator; instead he served two stints as a bank clerk before finally moving to London in 1872 and beginning a career as a full-time artist. The book that first brought him wide attention, Washington Irving's *Old Christmas*, was published in 1875, and the first two of his hugely popular children's picture books appeared in 1878. The prolific Caldecott, who had suffered from frail health since a childhood bout of rheumatic fever damaged his heart, died at the tragically early age of 39 while on a taxing trip to the U.S. Marcus does a superb job of summarizing Caldecott's busy life while focusing much of his attention on the work that defined him. In his acute analysis of the artist's work, Marcus, not surprisingly, gives major attention to the picture books, a form "invented" by this "incomparable innovator." This beautifully designed and illustrated large-format volume is a worthy tribute to the man who remains a giant in the world of children's literature. Grades 6-12. --Michael Cart

First rate bio of Caldecott. Not too long to lose the reader's interest, but not too short to leave out his interesting story. A witty and highly skilled storyteller (through his pictures), he literally changed the face of children's literature. It's as if he opened the windows in a house that had been shut up for too long. HE was the breeze that blew through the house and brought the children's picture book to a whole new level. He created a whole new level of fun to picture books, yet he was an excellent draftsman and really could NOT stop drawing. I still have my battered copy of his *The Queen of*

Hearts--I treasure it; I remember pouring over the pictures, drinking in every detail, as a young girl. This is a great book with one full page color picture but another sixteen half page color pictures. Also there are at least 16 different drawings from various books on the end papers ( I couldn't tell exactly how many on my copy because it is an exlibrary book and the cover is taped to the book). Also, there are about 70 small black and white or sepia toned drawings. Yet that is not even all of it but I think I've written enough for you to have a good idea of what is jam packed into this large format, 64 page book. You will enjoy this!

I already had read this book, so I knew what I was getting -- or thought I did. I was not disappointed. It arrived in perfect condition, in the usual rapid fashion, and is the same book that I was so eager to get. It does not feel like a children's book to me, although that is how it is billed. It was great to learn more about Mr. Caldecott, because of the awards that are so familiar to those of us who have used the children's section of the library so frequently.

Loved the story of his life! Loved that he influenced Beatrice Potter.

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