

2016 Phoenix Picture Book Award

Molly Bang for *Goose* (Blue Sky Press, 1996)



The charm and strength of this book is its simplicity, marked by the qualities of a master story-teller/illustrator in one. An important revision of “The Ugly Duckling,” this animal fable of finding oneself centers on belonging and acceptance, not looks. Though the anguish is similar, the morals here are quite unlike Andersen’s. The torment comes from within rather than without, and is conveyed through clever use of varied frames, layout, and nuanced use of white space. Bang’s oil paintings of various sizes emphasize the symbolic and emotional tenor of goose’s heterogeneous family life, and the book’s theme.

The natural palette and textured brush-strokes render the vitality of flora and fauna—from raindrops to feathers, to fur, to waves—and earth, water, and sky tones set the mood. A small package filled with qualities to savor, this book is quiet, profound, humorous and beautiful.