

A thank you from Aaron.

It is my very great honour to accept the Children's Literature Peace Award for 2013. I really am so chuffed, especially since it's for the book that has always meant more to me than any of my others.

**The Ghost of Miss Annabel Spoon** was written *years* ago – way back in early 2007. She formed the conclusion of a loose trilogy of picture books about difference, along with **Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley** and **Sunday Chutney**. All three books were the product of the same intense creative burst, and were bound by an underlying celebration of not quite fitting in.

But Annie, as I like to call her, went a little further than the other two books. With her, I wanted to write about people – in this case, a community – being afraid of someone *because* they were different. There's a school of thought about this book (that has appeared in a number of reviews and forums) suggesting that Annabel is not a ghost at all, but rather just a lonely woman, ostracised long ago for reasons long forgotten. In many ways, I find that reading of the book more affecting than any other. And for me, it makes Herbert's act of bravery – his decision to simply put aside prejudice and offer a hand of friendship - all the more moving.

Again, she was conceived and painted seven years ago. But then, as books often do, Annie went through a long serpentine journey of sitting in drawers, being temporarily usurped by easier books, being ignored and almost forgotten about, only to finally emerge to the beautiful response she has received in the last 12 months, crowned now by this extraordinary honour.

I wish to thank all those who voted for Annie and I want to also thank the Australian Psychological Society – specifically the Psychologists For Peace – for all your work and for the very existence of this award. It is a beautiful thing and I will cherish it forever.

With love and thanks,

Aaron Blabey.