



Dear Students of Massachusetts,

What an honor to receive the Massachusetts Children's Book Award!

I was delighted to hear of your regard for *The Mysterious Benedict Society* and impressed that you took the opportunity to vote for it -- and, what is more, that *your* votes were the key to this whole award. As you know, one of the plot elements in the book depends upon the notion that children's thoughts are scarcely heard. But yours came through loud and clear! Obviously you have chosen to associate with the right sort of adults.

The idea for *The Mysterious Benedict Society* began with an image of a boy taking a test. It's hard to believe that a story about taking tests might turn out to be interesting, but as you know, there was more to this test than met the eye. I've always been intrigued by riddles and puzzles, and I think it was this fascination that shaped the twisty path that Reynie, Sticky, Kate and Constance must follow in the book. I'm so pleased that you enjoyed following it too.

I'm also pleased that you are reading. When I was a kid I read just about anything I could get my hands on. Some of my favorite books were *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Watership Down*, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, and *The Hobbit*. (Children, rabbits, rodents, and hobbits: I seem to have preferred my heroes on the small side.) But I was always happiest with a book in my hand, whatever it was, and I encourage you to keep reading yourselves -- there are more wonderful books out there than you can read in a lifetime, so don't lose a moment!

Thanks again for this great honor!

Sincerely,

Trenton Lee Stewart