



From the Editors

Remembering and (Re)living: Probing the Collective and Individual Past

Stories are dynamic—told and heard, accepted and revered, rejected and rewritten by readers who draw from their experiences and understandings to garner meaning from the words on the page. In young adult texts—fiction and nonfiction, historical and contemporary and futuristic—this dynamism can encourage the critique of our collective past, helping us question assumptions about what came before and reconsider our responsibilities to the present and future.

These texts can also help us consider the adolescent experience across time and place and explore the similarities and differences that shape reality as young people navigate and draft their own coming of age stories. This universality can foster a connection to others and reinforce our shared existence as members of a human community. And yet, these texts can also give emotional reality to names, dates, and other factual information, letting us imagine the voices of those who lived in other places and times and who have sometimes been silenced in official accounts of history, ideally inspiring us to honor these voices and generate a better future. Through these stories, we might come to reject a single narrative and develop empathy for individuals we never knew—as well as those we did and do and will.

In this issue, we celebrate articles that explore the relationship between young adult literature, history, stories, and readers. “Past, Present, Story: A Conversation with Jennifer Donnelly and Christopher Paul Curtis” features a written exchange between two award-winning YA authors who share their perspec-

tives on history, nostalgia, privilege, and truth as they relate to their work as writers of historical fiction.

In “The (Im)possibility of Objectivity: Narrating the Past in Young Adult Historiographic Metafiction,” Amy Cross draws upon two Australian historiographic metafictional texts, *Into White Silence* (Eaton, 2008) and *The Lace Maker’s Daughter* (Crew, 2005), to demonstrate how particular narrative strategies destabilize the relationship between history and fiction and the past and the present and can invite readers to consider their own roles as meaning makers—of history and of their individual selves.

In “Troubling Ideologies: Creating Opportunities for Students to Interrogate Cultural Models in YA Literature,” Sean P. Connors and Ryan M. Rish explain how young adult novels can expose readers to liberating ideologies and highlight existing power imbalances—but also reinforce the status quo. The authors explore whether or not YA literature is capable of reifying problematic ideologies about adolescents and their relationships to the people and the world around them.

Margaret Robbins, in her piece “Using Graphic Memoirs to Discuss Social Justice Issues in the Secondary Classroom,” analyzes how graphic memoirs can be used in high school classrooms to introduce and teach social justice issues through a critical literacy lens. Robbins provides educators with practical questions and learning activities to accompany *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* by Art Spiegelman, *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* by Lila Quintero Weaver, and *A Game for Swallows* by Zeina Abirached.

In “Beauty Is in the Eye of the West: An Analysis of An Na’s *The Fold*,” Joanne Yi draws upon content and thematic analyses to explore how Asian American children seek a Western model of beauty through three types of aesthetic modification: the eyelid fold, male height, and cosmetic use. She further examines how standards of beauty represented in YA fiction can impact the construction of ethnic identity among adolescent readers.

S. d. Collins’s column, “Book in Review: a Teaching Guide—Writing the Past to Right the Future: *The Cure for Dreaming*,” provides extensive resources and strategies for teaching Cat Winters’s *The Cure for Dreaming*, a YA novel that explores historical and contemporary injustices. Collins provides lesson ideas and prompts that encourage deep examination of these injustices as well as hope for the possibility of overcoming them.

In her regular column, “Right to Read: (Re)envisioning and (Re)reading: Examining Problematic Texts,” Teri S. Lesesne invites the participation of two educators who have written widely about problematic texts in light of contemporary culture, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Debbie Reese. These teachers and scholars answer questions about how to approach classic titles that could be troublesome given their dated (and sometimes racist) content, offering resources for locating diverse alternative texts.

“Layered Literacies” column editors Susan L. Groenke and Jud Laughter invite teachers and teacher educators to share their favorite tech resources in their piece, “Tech Tools for Reader Response, Communal Engagement, and Effective Writing.” This extensive and varied collection of tools provides opportunities

for teachers to help their students engage with texts in authentic and meaningful ways.

We express heartfelt thanks to our outgoing column editors. S.d., Teri, Susan, and Jud, your wisdom, care, and passion have resulted in writings that make a significant contribution to the journal and field. We appreciate you.

As a final reflective piece in this issue, esteemed young adult author Ruta Sepetys informs and inspires us with her contribution, “Historical Fiction: The Silent Soldier.” Amidst criticism that historical fiction doesn’t sell, Sepetys offers evidence—academic and personal—to suggest that historical fiction can (and should) be sold in our global learning community due to its thematic value, offerings of truth, and opportunities for personal connection.

As you read the articles within this issue, we encourage you to consider how they remind us that “every living soul is a book of their own history, which sits on the ever-growing shelf in the library of human memories” (Gantos, 2011, p. 259). Consider, too, how they also reinforce the sentiment that “If you stare at the center of the universe, there is coldness there. A blankness. Ultimately, the universe doesn’t care about us. Time doesn’t care about us. That’s why we have to care about each other” (Levithan, 2012, p. 320). Stories matter in this caring: “I leapt eagerly into books. The characters’ lives were so much more interesting than the lonely heartbeat of my own” (Sepetys, 2013, p. 29).

References

- Gantos, J. (2011). *Dead end in Norvelt*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Levithan, D. (2012). *Every day*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Sepetys, R. (2013). *Out of the Easy*. New York, NY: Philomel.