From the Guest Editors

In this issue, we explore how multicultural and multivoiced young adult literature engages classroom communities in meaningful discourse and broadens adolescents’ perspectives. Our cover artwork, Iris-Between-Worlds by Colleen Helie, embodies the poignancy of adolescence and the fluidity of conversations that encourage growth. Contributors to our themed issue bring to light stories that connect students with the personal and the global. As a result of our Call for Manuscripts, we noted that three categories emerged: bias and empathy; power and equity; and gender and sexuality.

Alluding to Rudine Sims Bishop’s concept of mirrors and windows, several contributors carefully illustrate how empathy can break down biases. We appreciate Grice, Rebellino, and Stamper’s celebration of challenging the narrative status quo. In their article, they showcase lived experiences that have historically been overlooked but are explored through recent award-winning verse novels and graphic narratives. Building on this idea of diverse representation, Gilmore’s “Saying What We Don’t Mean” argues that teachers are responsible for offering students a variety of characters and situations so that students can grow and learn to recognize implicit bias. Similarly, Van Vaerenewyk’s “Aesthetic Readings of Diverse Literary Narratives for Social Justice” asserts that cultivating empathetic global citizens relies on all of us becoming better readers of diverse stories.

We noted how this call prompted contributors to explore issues of power and equity that are developed in YA texts. Malo-Juvera’s “A Postcolonial Primer with Multicultural YA Literature” illustrates how he introduces postcolonialism so that students can hone their abilities to interrogate normalized oppression and begin to read the world critically. Ginsberg, Glenn, and Moye also examine issues of power and equity in their article, “Opportunities for Advocacy.” The YA texts they feature center on identity denial and afford rich discussions about which identities are privileged or denied, affirmed or suppressed. Such exploration of power and equity is also central to Lillge and Domínguez’s thoughtful article, “Launching Lessons.” In it, they address incorporating divergent points of view in the English classroom and offer readers ideas for projects addressing social inequity and injustice.

Our contributors also challenge readers to include global and multivoiced expressions of gender and sexuality (if they are not already doing so) with contemporary texts. Hayn, Clemmons, and Olvey’s “Using Moon at Nine to Broaden Multicultural Perspectives” analyzes their experiences reading this love story between two young women in post-Shah Iran with their university students, while in “I Don’t Really Know What a Fair Portrayal Is and What a Stereotype Is” Boyd and Bereiter remind readers of the importance of listening and learning from their students and trying new pedagogical approaches based on those relationships. Finally, Kedley and Spiering look at how voices and form convey multiple experiences of gender and sexuality in ELA classrooms.

Articles such as these are conversation-starters. We invite you to continue these conversations with your colleagues and students. Send us your ideas so that we may continue to broaden and deepen the conversation: Kelly Byrne Bull (kbull@ndm.edu), Jacqueline Bach (jbach@lsu.edu).

Work Cited


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