

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



The heart of every well-heard story is gratitude, and it is in the hearing of stories that we truly become human. (C.W. Christian, 1995)

I'm thinking a lot about gratitude these days. Gratitude is a stance more than a response, one that was actively encouraged in me from a very early age and something I teach my own children. Traci Sorrel writes beautifully about gratitude as a Cherokee cultural touchstone and guide in *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* (2018). I'm currently rereading a glorious poetry collection, *Thanku: Poems of Gratitude* illustrated by Marlena Myles and edited by Miranda Paul (2019). To live in gratitude is to live acutely aware, with a generousness of spirit. Reaching gratitude requires intentional awareness and seeking, determined appreciation. Gratitude is, in essence, a moral stance, as morality concerns how we relate to other human being in this world. Story expands our scope of possibilities for relating—providing a vibrant venue for moral deliberation and growth, a path toward seeing, understanding, and appreciating—with gratitude—those with whom we share this world.

The authors of articles in this edition of *The Dragon Lode* explore the potential for children's literature to nurture moral awareness, appreciation, stance, and action. Izumi-Taylor, Bubrig, and Meredith write of the importance of literature in nurturing children's spirits. The authors use "spirit" here in the Japanese sense, relating it to moral development and examining possibilities for literature-rich pedagogy that takes advantage of the moral capacity of quality books. Morell and Morell examine teacher action, suggesting that in a climate where teachers' curricular choices may feel restrained, it is all the more imperative that we purposefully—through

book choices and pedagogical decisions—engage learners critically with the multicultural, multifaceted world around us. Julia M. López-Robertson, Jeanne G. Fain, Janine M. Schall, and Maya Christina González examine how immigration and immigrants are represented authentically and in appropriately complex ways in picture books, offering readers counterstories to the dominant narrative that "guide us to listen to the voices of those who are exploited and to respect their truth." Pearson and Lemke, noting multicultural literature as a "natural medium" for developing critical literacy, address the use of text sets to help readers understand the complexities of complex social issues. (See Parsons et al in the Spring 2016 *The Dragon Lode* for more about using text sets with Notable Books for a Global Society winners. Past editions of *The Dragon Lode* and NBGS award lists are available on the ILA Children's Literature and Reading SIG website—clrsig.org.)

As I read this edition's offerings, I celebrate with you the incredible power of children's literature to evoke good in the world and our lives. And I am immensely grateful to be in community with teachers, authors, publishers, and scholars who insist upon and work toward all the stories—many voices, many ways—being heard, considered, and embraced. Children's literature can, indeed, make us better humans together.

Best,

Collegially,
Suzi Christian Parsons, President,
ILA Children's Literature and Reading SIG