

## Editors' Introduction

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As we worked to co-edit *RDYL* 6.2, it felt like every day the changing political landscape was testing our resilience in new ways. As educators, we worry about our students and their safety on our campuses. As scholars, we're concerned about challenges to academic freedom across US universities and colleges. As people, we're enraged by the perpetual disregard for human rights across the globe. In times like these, we hold on to gratitude. We are grateful to our writers and our *RDYL* team for their commitment to diversity and inclusion in the face of continued threats to our communities. With 3 articles and 5 book reviews in this issue, *RDYL* remains steadfast to our mission of uplifting marginalized voices in youth literature.

Our beautiful artwork for 6.2, "In Moonlight," was created by Magdalena Mora, an award-winning illustrator. Magdalena received the 2023 Pura Belpré Illustrator Award Honor for her art in *Still Dreaming/Seguimos soñando* written by Claudia Guadalupe Martínez with translation by Luis Humberto Crosthwaite. "In Moonlight" is a dreamy depiction of young people reading in a garden illuminated by the moon. The angle and weights of the flowers make it seem as if they are protecting the young people and creating a refuge. Magdalena's art is a reminder to find connection in storytelling and in nature during precarious times.

We begin issue 6.2 with Julie Bell and Melissa Cast-Brede's article, "Middle Grades Novels in Verse: Examining Stereotypes in Early Adolescent Characters." Bell and Cast-Brede use two methods for challenging "versophobia" in the classroom: confident characterization and youth lens. Through the authors' analysis of Aida Salazar's *The Moon Within* and Jacqueline Woodson's *Before the Ever After*, pre-service and in-service teachers and librarians will gain insight into their own anxieties around verse novels and ways to help their students overcome these concerns as well.

In “Is it Ramadan, Curious George? International Muslims Read Children’s Books Depicting Islam,” Scott Beck, Yasar Bodur, and Youssef Salhi share the result of their mixed methods study centering thirty-five Muslim teachers from twenty countries and their perspective on children’s books with Islam and Muslim representation.

In “Critical Peritextual Analysis: Critical Possibilities of Peritext in Books for Young Readers,” Sarah Jackson, Nithya Sivashankar, and Rebekah Degener showcase the importance of including the peritext as part of teaching books. The authors refer to “critical peritextual analysis” (CPA) when analyzing texts as a way to center critical literacy.

We are fortunate to include 5 book reviews for 6.2 that cover the gambit on diverse scholarship in youth literature. Our book review editors Cristina Rhodes and Nithya Sivashankar oversaw the production of the following: Tharini Viswanath’s review of *Race in Young Adult Speculative Fiction* (2021) edited by Meghan Gilbert-Hickey and Miranda A. Green-Bartee; Karen Sands-O’Connor’s review of *Inclusive Young Adult Fiction: Authors of Colour in the United Kingdom* (2019) by Melanie Ramdarshan Bold; Kyle Chong and Emma Paulson’s review of *Asian Children’s Literature and Film in a Global Age: Local, National and Transnational Trajectories* (2020) edited by Bernard Wilson and Sharmani Patricia Gabriel; Edcel J. Cintron-Gonzalez’ review of *Tactics of Hope in Latinx Children’s and Young Adult Literature* (2022) by Jesus Montaña and Regan Postma-Montaña; Latrice M. Ferguson’s review of *Reading and Teaching with Diverse Nonfiction Children’s Books: Representations and Possibilities* (2021) edited by Thomas Crisp, Suzanne M. Knezek, and Roberta Price Gardner.

We hope *RDYL* 6.2 will continue to foster our readers’ interest and commitment to diverse youth literature.