

Concluding Comments From the Editors

ANGIE ZAPATA, THOMAS CRISP, & MARY NAPOLI

This issue of the *Journal of Children's Literature (JCL)* reflects an open call that focuses on research, scholarship, and current conversations about literature for children.

AS WE COME TO THE END of our time in service to the *Journal of Children's Literature*, our team is compelled to pause, reflect, and offer some observations about what we were able to accomplish during our tenure as editors and where the journal may go next. In the wake of the loss of our co-editor and friend Dr. Vivian Yenika-Agbaw, whose research consistently pushed the field toward postcolonial and critical considerations of children's literature, we find ourselves all the more devoted to the commitments our team shared and that we featured in our first editors' message (Volume 46, Issue 1) in the spring of 2020.

Over the last three years, our team strove to both honor and advance those stated commitments during a time in which our profession grappled with the realities of a global health pandemic that remains with us even as we write this final introduction. We also witnessed the very real consequences of racism, intolerance, injustice, and fascist and right-wing rhetoric in the United States, including mass shootings and murder at community festivals, in places of worship, and in schools; the rejection of women's right to privacy and agency over their own bodies through the Supreme Court's rejection of *Roe v. Wade*; and even a literal insurrection and attempted coup at the U.S. Capitol. We began and ended our work with this journal during a very dark period of American and global history.

From our first issue onward, we welcomed submissions that centered literature studies in relation to

issues of social justice and equity, representations of populations that have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in children's texts and culture, and the intersections between popular culture and identity. We remained steadfast in our mission and are immensely grateful to have had the opportunity to support the publication of 24 peer-reviewed articles, five Scholars' Commentaries, two podcasts, six Critical Conversations columns written by Edith Campbell, two Teachers' Voices essays written by classroom educators and co-edited by Suzanne M. Knezek and Paul Ricks, and many other contributions in the form of columns, interviews, reports, poems—and so much more.

We are grateful and humbled to have had the opportunity to support the publication of this work and collaborate with all those who contributed to *JCL*. We are proud to have supported new voices that were introduced to our field, essays that addressed new and significant topics, and our individual issues devoted to topics like the #OwnVoices debates, critical multicultural analysis, critical literacy, and transnationalism. Going forward, we encourage the Children's Literature Assembly board and leadership to offer their full support to *JCL* editorial teams, selecting individuals with commitments to criticality, equity, and inclusion, drawing upon their expertise, and including them in decisions made regarding the journal, its content, and its future directions.

Overview of Contents

In this issue, CLA readers will find four peer-reviewed articles as well as one scholarly commentary. In “Portrayals of Deafness in Middle-Grade Literature: Disability or Diversity?,” Jared S. Crossley and Linda T. Parsons offer a qualitative content analysis of eight middle-grade novels and identify two types of portrayals: normalcy narratives, which align with the medical model, and disability counternarratives, which argue that d/Deafness is not a limiting disability, but a viable and thriving community of practice. Coauthors Rhiannon M. Maton, Breeanna Dexter, Nicolette McKeon, Emily Urias-Velasquez, and Breanna Washington similarly conduct a critical content analysis and employ a penal abolitionist lens to examine how children’s experiences of familial incarceration are represented in their manuscript titled “Far Apart, Close in Heart: Exploring Representations of Familial Incarceration in Children’s Picturebooks.” To follow, Kelly K. Wissman offers us “Crossing Thresholds and Becoming Vitally Attached: Bringing an Affective Lens to Reading Culturally Sustaining Picturebooks.” In her article, Wissman examines how culturally sustaining picturebooks create opportunities for multilingual students to cross thresholds and experience vitality and feelings. Paige Coyne, Krista J. Munroe-Chandler, and Sarah J. Woodruff wrap up our collection of research manuscripts with their research titled “A Content and Thematic Analysis of Body-Positive Children’s Picturebooks.” Their analysis highlights how body-positive picturebooks can help to support early body-dissatisfaction prevention and body-positivity enhancement; they offer a call for careful text selection on the matter. We are so pleased to also publish a scholarly commentary in this issue from Paul Ricks and Laura Hudock titled “Dear Vivian: A Tribute to

Our Academic Mother and Friend” as a final farewell to our departed colleague and friend.

A warm and profound thank you to Edith Campbell, who also completes her tenure as a regular editor and author of the Critical Conversations column. You can find her final, thoughtful column in this issue. Thank you, Edi! Readers will also find that this issue of *JCL* features its regular CLA series, including a note from the CLA president, Dr. Ruth Lowery, and the 2022 Notable Children’s Books in the Language Arts column, in addition to an interview with Jerry Craft by Angela Wiseman and Ally Hauptman, co-chairs of the 2022 CLA Breakfast.

We would like to acknowledge our incredible reviewers who so thoughtfully advised our authors forward as they revised these impactful pieces. Thank you also to Rebecca S. Bender and Ash Good for their impeccable service to the journal as an excellent copyeditor and talented layout designer, respectively. And a final heartfelt thank you to Dr. Sarah Reid (congratulations!) for her careful and expert work as lead editorial assistant for the last two and a half years.

It has truly been our pleasure to curate research manuscripts for *JCL*. We look forward to all that is to come. To that end, we conclude our final editors’ introduction by welcoming the new incoming editors of the *Journal of Children’s Literature*, Jill Hermann-Wilmarth, Laura Jiménez, Caitlin Ryan, and Craig Young. We hope their tenure with *JCL* and the Children’s Literature Assembly will be even more rewarding and supportive for them than ours was for us. ▣

Warmly,
 Exiting *JCL* Editors
 Angie Zapata, Thomas Crisp, and Mary Napoli