

International Views in Children's Literature

Jill P. May

This fall issue introduces our readers to some new books that either have international settings or were created by authors born outside the United States. In some ways, our theme for this issue, "International Views in Children's Literature," takes us back to our very first issue in 2008 when we told readers in our first *FOSR* editorial that we wanted to explore "international literature, or literature written by, for, or about individuals from around the globe" (Alsup, King, & May iii). You would think that we would have learned our lesson about this very nebulous topic. After all, Eve Tal, one of our Editorial Board members, declared it "an American invention" in that issue, and she added, "Anything not written in America is automatically classified as international literature by the American audience even though the author writing in German in Germany for German children is writing German children's literature, as are authors writing in French, Russian, Swedish, Chinese, etc." (7).

Still, here we are again, looking at books about a Vietnamese immigrant family in Alabama, American teens touring South America, past and present experiences of Jewish families, Islam in Middle Eastern history, picturesque imagery from the regions of Sardinia in Italy, and Chinese panda bears. Didn't these stories fit within Eve's description of "internationalism" as "the Americanization of [foreign] children's books" (8)? Weren't they inventing someone else's lifestyles for children in the United States? We invite you to read the reviews in this issue and tell us what you think. We would love to have a "last word" that explains how internationalism does or doesn't work in any of them.

Then again, we'd also love to hear about your reactions to having two books discussed in one review. Eve Tal has helped us, this time discussing the authenticity and importance of two picture books about Jewish families. She seems to agree with Nicole Spurlock's judgments after Nicole shared the two books with her daughter. Two reviews, two books, four opinions. What is your reaction? That would give us a "final word."

And we're dying to learn how you react when you read the intimate responses that come from close readings and discussions of mother reviewer Emily Bible or Dallas Woodburn's efforts to work with former students in her review of a teen novel. Do these reviewers, combined with the "first opinions" of Nisreen Anati and Allison Layfield, give you a richer context when you pick up the books they read and try sharing them with someone? One way to compare the difference between "voices" in review journals and a single voice is to consider the difference between your reactions to the last review in this issue that has no mirror discussion. Do you feel something is missing? If so, would you like to contribute it to us?

Maybe you just like to see what our reviewers have to say, especially if they are working with children in a formal setting. If so, relax. We aren't really expecting to hear from all of you! In fact, we invite you to just read all of the remaining contributions and see if they pique your curiosity. But if and when you've finished you want to drop us a line, please do!

Works Cited

Alsup, Janet, Christine King, and Jill P. May. "A Note from the Editors." *First Opinions Second Reactions*. 1.1 (2008), iii. Web.

Tal, Eve. "Eating McDonald's in China." *First Opinions Second Reactions* 1.1 (2008): 7-9. Web.

Contact Us

Co-editors **Jill P. May** and **Janet Alsup** invite you to write to them with your reactions to the reviews in this issue of *First Opinions, Second Reactions*. Jill's email address is jillmay@purdue.edu; Janet's is alsupj@purdue.edu. Or, email the journal's new editorial assistant, Ann Koci at akoci@purdue.edu.