

Introduction and Editor's Note

It is always interesting to discover the connections among books included in the unthemed issues of *WOW Review*. Needless to say, frequently there are universal themes that weave through each story and uniquely join together within the imagination of readers' minds. Sometimes, the titles reviewed cluster in paired sets or triplets with themes so strongly aligned that one title offers perspectives that extend the insights of another title reviewed. This first issue of *WOW Review* Vol. 5 reflects the latter with several potential connections throughout the nine titles reviewed here.

Five novels in this issue share stories of young people coming of age in different eras and facing unique and complex challenges. Political turmoil provide the context for two books, *My Brother's Shadow*, a World War I story set in Germany, and *Never Fall Down*, a novel that takes place in Cambodia, 1975. Both books reveal the toll that war takes on the minds, spirits, and lives of youth whether they are at home or on the "killing fields." Perspectives on the U.S. Civil Rights era are found in *No Crystal Stair* and *One Crazy Summer*. *No Crystal Stair* documents the story of Lewis Micheaux who as a young man migrates to New York and opens an influential book store predominantly for Blacks during a time of racial injustice. *One Crazy Summer* provides the perspective of a naive young African American girl who travels with her sisters to visit her mother in California in 1968—a journey that finds them eventually confronted with the Black Panther movement and its ideologies. Facing challenges in a contemporary era, *Stoner and Spaz* brings readers into the life of a teen with Cerebral Palsy and his struggles to shape an identity within the confines of his personal perceptions of how he is viewed in society.

The picture books reviewed in this issue of *WOW Review* are connected with threads of family and community sharing, the environment, and distinct insights into global cultures. *Out of the Way! Out of the Way!* follows over time the bustling, changing life around a tree growing in India. A strong sense of place makes the tree a symbol of home and family for the boy who grows into older adulthood within the story. *Carolina's Gift: A Story of Peru* places the reader in a bustling market as a young girl searches for just the right gift for her grandmother. South Africa is the setting for yet another family story—*Meerkat Mail*. This humorous contemporary fantasy reminds readers that other families are working together within the environment beyond human communities. And, *The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families*, relates the work of biologist Gordon Sato, whose efforts to support community and the environment in Eritrea, Africa, invite readers into a fascinating story that links biology, history and social studies. It links to the African setting in *Meerkat Mail* but also to the notion of change over time in the first book mentioned and how this change in some instances creates the need for environmental planning to maintain and sustain the land that supports our families and communities.

Each title offers images and stories of the global community and serve collectively as a reminder of the uniquely diverse array of books that share the potential to open borders among global communities.

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