

**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
**Children's Literature Society**  
**American Literature Association**  
**31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference**

**May 21-24, 2020**

**Manchester Grand Hyatt**  
**One Market Place**  
**San Diego, CA**

**Building New Worlds: Empathy and Expanding Moral Boundaries in American Children's and Young Adult Literature**

For several years Children's Literature has been expanding its boundaries with stories that reflect the diversity of our nation (e.g., socio-economic, racial, ethnic, gender, and religious diversity), stories that engage previously marginalized multicultural historical perspectives and such critical concerns as the environmental crisis.

For example *Mango Moon* by Diane De Anda tells the story of a young girl watching her father taken away by ICE and her attempt to find some sort of comfort with this devastating loss. This story—as well as a remarkable growing number of other narratives—appeals directly to the heart, to a moral vision that both illuminates and embraces the voice and plight of “the Other.” And at their core is empathy.

These narratives reflect the change in the construction of childhood we have seen for several decades from the Romantic Idealized Child, whose most identifiable trait was innocence and a need for protection from the harshness of the world, to an adultified construction of the child who can and must hear about these harsh realities. We are witnessing what can be termed a “new moral literature” in which moral boundaries are being stretched through powerful appeals to the heart and empathy, leading the child reader to a new world of understanding and compassion. The intention of this new moral literature is not to didactically affirm rules or prescribed behaviors, but to open the heart. Empathy/compassion is the central moral of these stories—the aim is to awaken the child reader to the humanity of others, to experience compassion—and to encourage through such awareness acts of graciousness.

Presentation topics may include: (1) Historically marginalized points of view—a “new historical world” that includes the genocidal realities of Native Americans, the trauma of slavery, the immigration crisis; (2) entering into the worlds of diverse communities: the poor and homeless; gender, racial diversity; being different/feeling different: body image, disabilities/mental health, queerness/transgender; (3) environmental concerns; and (4) pedagogical and theoretical issues: how might such stories affect the classroom? What do these stories tell us about the communication and effect of ethics/morals through narrative?

Two panels will explore these new worlds that affirm, insist on our shared humanity by sharing stories of children caught in the sorrows of the present.

Please include academic rank and affiliation and AV requests

Please send abstracts or proposals (around 300 words) by January 10, 2020 to Dorothy Clark

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