



## Garyfalia Terizaki, Educator

### Reading: A Universal Language as a Means of Communication and Expression

**Congratulations! Tell us about the Greek International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Award that you recently received. IBBY is a non-profit organization which represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together.**

Receiving the Greek IBBY Award is very important and honorable both for the [Trifylia Branch](#) of the [Central Public Library of Kalamata](#), in Filiatra, Greece, where I work, and for me personally.

The award ceremony took place at the National Library of Greece on April 2, 2024 (*International Children's Book Day*), where we celebrated children's literature.

During this event, the "*Experimental Reading Workshop*" (Πειραματικό Εργαστήρι Ανάγνωσης) that I designed and implemented in 2023-2024 at the Trifylia Branch of the Central Public Library of Kalamata was also awarded. This program aimed to promote the love of literature in children and young adults. The innovative thing about this particular program is that I tried to apply the [Stanislavsky](#) system through the context of my research for my master's degree in Theater Studies at the Open University of Cyprus.

The idea is that it could be implemented in schools, libraries, other organizations and/or by individuals. PATAKI Publications, the sponsor for this IBBY award, donated books worth 300 euros.

It is a great honor to be awarded for my work by the Greek National Section of IBBY (*Kyklos Paidikou Vivliou*), the most important body for children's and young people's books in Greece [https://www.facebook.com/ibbygrecce/?locale=el\\_GR](https://www.facebook.com/ibbygrecce/?locale=el_GR).

Although in the past I have received various awards, I single out this IBBY Award as well as the Sing for Hope sponsored Artist Award for the following reasons:

The Sing for Hope sponsored Artist Award was used to purchase books and materials for visual activities but mainly this award gave me confidence and the opportunity to connect with other individuals with the same interests! That confidence guided me to design and implement the "*Experimental Reading Workshop*" that was later recognized and awarded as I mentioned earlier. Moreover, the idea for this workshop had been floating around in my mind since last year. It strengthened my intellectual horizons and opened new paths for me. I met with remarkable people with whom we interacted, shared dreams, and exchanged ideas.

New collaborations arose, such as my participation in the editorial team of "*Kokkini Alepou*" (Κόκκινη Αλεπού), <https://kokkinialepou.gr> the only Greek e-magazine exclusively for children's books that created the ongoing powerful campaign #diavazo\_dynata to raise awareness about the importance of reading out loud.



#### How have these awards impacted your library and community?

The Trifylia library is a branch of the Kalamata Public Library, created a year and a half ago where upon taking over the project, I gave it a "soul" and made it work with vision and love. Like the library in Kalamata, the branch in the small town of Filiatra are modern cores of creativity, learning, and innovation by and implementing programs to promote reading. The IBBY Award gave this branch of the library greater visibility and made its programs more widely known. Local school group visits to the Trifylia library take place almost daily and we also implemented online reading-friendly programs with schools in distant districts.

#### What best practices would you share that you use in your programming that are transforming society. How are you impacting the children so when they grow up they don't repeat the wrongs done to them?

There are several ways in which our programs aim to transform society. In the "*Experimental Reading Workshop*", we read children's books that aim, apart from the children to perceive the entertaining side of reading and become readers, to delve into the text and the characters of the heroes through questions and various games involving other arts. Through this process of immersion, they become a community, cultivate empathy, develop social skills, perceive their environment from a different perspective, learn to read body language and communicate in non-verbal ways. The reader becomes the character, walking in their shoes and feeling what the character is feeling.

Their need to visit the library has been internalized and indeed, they visit it independently of the program itself. From their participation in this workshop, their parents and their social environment has also changed. Their experiences are shared with their classmates and new children started visiting the library and participating in the workshop. In addition, with the support of the Sing for Hope sponsored Artist Award, books were purchased in different languages to encourage participation by members of the society whose first language is not Greek. Last year a reading festival took place where participants read books out loud in their own language. This is how reading becomes a universal language as a means of communication and expression!

Many are concerned that children don't read, but I am very optimistic and believe the opposite. For children, the book is what the cell phone is for us. When they find something they are interested in, they will read it and if they don't read it, they will listen to it. The word "reader", after all, has escaped its conventional meaning, now a reader is also the listener or the viewer. For every child there is a book waiting to be discovered! Libraries give this opportunity to children to discover it faster!

At the Trifylia library a children's STEAM workshop inspired by colleague Maria Michael is a program where participating children have yet another opportunity to visit the library for a different reason: to search and discover the voice of science through hands on experimentation.

Lastly, this year, in addition to the children's reading club, I am working on another workshop, the "*Adult Picture Book Club*", that will continue through this summer 2024. This initiative is a reading club for adult readers where we read only picture books, with or without text that takes place each Saturday with about 16 participants filled with enthusiasm. I believe that for children to change, adults must also change. This workshop, that also serves as therapy, is mainly attended by mothers, for now. They not only learn to read picture books to their children, but more importantly they tap into their inner-child and enjoy the program for themselves!

#### What is the next step?

Our aim as a library is to attract more people from the surrounding communities to visit the Trifylia library and participate in its programs. At the same time, however, I am trying to attract more teens to the library by planning an educational program on reading for young adults that will be implemented next year.

This summer the Trifylia branch is participating for the second year in a row in the *Summer Reading and Creativity Campaign 2024* organized by the National Library of Greece and is implemented thanks to the kind cooperation of the EBE and the Laboratory of Pedagogical Applications and Production of Educational Materials of the Pedagogical Department of

Elementary Education of the Greek National Academy of Sciences (Professor Konstantinos D. Malafantis, Director).

Throughout the summer, libraries coordinate their actions, while young and old share their reading experiences on social networks using #KE2024gr and #forEBEr.

The hope is that at some point we will be able to collaborate with libraries in Greece and abroad!



"One book calls to another unexpectedly, creating alliances across different cultures and centuries."

— Alberto Manguel, *The Library at Night*