



Ms. Lombardo's review of *The Way We See Things* (VOYA February 2005), written by thirteen-year-old authors Iffer Beisswenger and Margaret Eldred, missed the point of the book entirely. The young authors never intended [it] as a "self-help" book of any sort. They hoped that if they risked talking about some of the topics that mattered to them, two things might happen. The first was that "grownups" might stop advising long enough to listen to their concerns, and the second was that other kids might follow their lead and discuss their own perspectives. They wrote it after some of their closest friends faced devastating situations that illustrated how alone and misunderstood they felt. They do not pretend to speak for others; in fact, they often disagree with each other, but they do provide a springboard for conversations that are desperately needed.

Ms. Lombardo's critique of the format and the content of the book is in direct contrast to the hundreds of letters that the kids have received from around the country, and the articles and reviews that have appeared in newspapers and magazines. The authors describe their choice of format to be as "far away from textbooks as we can get, and not one of those cartoony books that make us feel like babies." They emulated the things they and their friends like to read best—journals and scrapbooks.

Ms. Lombardo did not find any insights in the book. Feedback from many other readers indicates that often adults were surprised that the young authors worried about things like the national debt, racial profiling, the gender bias they have experienced in their classes, or how exactly to talk to a date about consensual sex. Questions about how to figure out who pays when you go on a date, and what to do about a friend who is getting into trouble without betraying trust might not seem significant to Ms. Lombardo, but they were very important to many middle school kids who have written letters.

It is hard to find support for Ms. Lombardo's concern that students will not want to be seen carrying the book around when the signing at The Dartmouth Bookstore resulted in the store's highest single-day sales for last year, second only to Harry Potter. The book has been purchased by school personnel in eight different countries.

Readers might want to contrast Ms. Lombardo's review with a student's review on [Amazon.com](#): "This a great book. I didn't know someone our age could write a book, but they managed to say a lot of the things all of us want to say. Everyone's parents should read this book."

—Carolynne Krusi, Editor of *The Way We See Things*, 2005 Class Dean, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

▶ **The reviewer responds:** *Perhaps, as Ms. Krusi contends, this title does appeal to a select group of middle school students. The book's substantial flaws, however, precluded my giving it anything but a mediocre rating. Because I felt so negatively about the book, I solicited feedback from other adults and from middle school students. They were unanimous in their dislike of the format, feeling it was too juvenile for the age for which the book is intended. They were also put off by the artificial and posed quality of the content and the photographs.*

There is a significant need for books dealing with the questions and topics raised in this title. And the fact that the concept and execution of the book was done by thirteen-year-old authors is a testament to their individual and joint creativity. I'm glad for these young authors that their book has been well received by some readers, reinforcing my belief that all books do have their audience. Nevertheless I stand by my original review. —Cindy Lombardo.

The April 2005 issue of VOYA just landed in my mailbox, and all I can say is WOW. It looks great. You really have come a long way, baby! My congratulations to everyone at VOYA—this is an issue I bet my teen patrons would pick up on their own!—Sophie R. Brookover, Senior Children's Librarian, Camden County Library, Voorhees, New Jersey.

▶ **The editor responds:** *In all the raves we received about the new full-color VOYA, "WOW" was your favorite word. Much credit goes to our extraordinarily talented young designer, Jason Enterline. A few negative reactions appeared in a lively discussion on the YALSA-BK listserv. It can be difficult to accept change in a beloved publication; we're proud and grateful that VOYA means so much to so many of you. Read on for more comments—including some from our YA author subscribers.*

WOW! The magazine looks tremendous! Now the look truly matches the caliber of its content.—Diane Sanabria, Young Adult Services Coordinator, Leominster Public Library, Leominster, Massachusetts.

What a great job you all did—I can't believe how beautiful it is! Great editorial, too! Now VOYA's not just deep substance, but also great style!—Jennifer Hubert, **Reading Rants! Out of the Ordinary Booklists for Teens** (<http://ln.lib.mi.us/~amutch/jen>), New York City.

I thought at first the April issue was yet another spring catalog! But luckily I saw it was VOYA in time. It's exciting and colorful and trendy and yes, it'll take a little getting used to—but it's oh, so appropriate for the 21st century—a great idea, well executed.

—Nancy Garden, YA Author, Carlisle, Massachusetts.

Am I the only one who thought the new cover was too busy? Frankly when I first picked it up, I thought it was a catalog from Demco. A co-worker also prefers the easier-to-read VOYA logo on the older issues.—Miriam Neiman, [YALSA-BK], YA/Reference Librarian, Welles-Turner Memorial Library, Glastonbury, Connecticut.

I disagree that the new VOYA cover is busy. It reflects the MTV way of using quick, short images to create a visual collage. It is very zine-like in appearance as well, which is cool. Even though it's not a magazine for teens, I am thrilled to see that the new design is similar to magazines that teens enjoy.—Kevin King, [YALSA-BK], Lead Librarian Teen Services, Kalamazoo Public Library, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Why did it need to change? Those of us who work with YAs know and love VOYA already. Who were they trying to impress? It's not like it needs to appeal to teens. I ordinarily love changes, but in this case my thinking is "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."—Toni Reese, [YALSA-BK], Youth Services Librarian, Sump Memorial Library, Papillion, Nebraska.

My guess is that they're looking forward and trying to impress younger librarians. The leading edge of the MTV generation is now 25 years old, and undoubtedly contains some librarians. Also there is growing teen involvement with VOYA—poetry contest, teen reviewers, and so on, who might be part of the audience for the new look. It works for me.—Ian McKinney, [YALSA-BK], Assistant Manager, Young Adults' Services, Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

This 25-year-old librarian LOVES the new VOYA look! Finally the package is as appealing as the content. I like the creative use of fonts, the handy "tab-top" graphic that tags regular features, and the colors make everything pop. I predict that there will be a lot of teens trying to snag this off my desk . . . and I can see my Teen Advisory Board getting more enjoyment out of reading reviews. Kudos, VOYA!—Erin Downey Howerton, [YALSA-BK], Head, Young Adult Department, Hays Public Library, Hays, Kansas.

Absolutely freakin' brilliant design. The layout for my online piece was totally awesome. And I can't believe I finally got a chance to see what I look like in a tie and clean shirt.—David Lubar, YA Author and VOYA Columnist, Nazareth, Pennsylvania.

First, I want to say, "Woot!" to the new look. It is totally faboo! (Can you tell I spend way too much time with teenagers?) I honestly didn't recognize my dear old VOYA at first (even with the bright yellow title staring me full in the face), I was so dazzled!

I also want to send a hearty thank you to Rebecca C. Moore for her article, *All Shapes of Hunger*. I don't read fanfiction for legal reasons, but I've always felt it's a good thing that does meet a variety of needs. When I started to write, I wrote fanfic. We didn't call it that back in the 1960s—it was *Star Trek* and Tolkien stories that I penned. When young fanfic writers first asked me in the most nervous ways what I thought of it, it would have taken a heckuva lot of nerve on my part to come down on them. I didn't. I encouraged them to use my work, even if I wouldn't read it myself, and they respect my reasons. (I also warned them to check with other writers.)

I also understand very well that for new writers, as Ms. Moore stated, the burden of creating characters, a universe, and continuities can seem overwhelming. Fanfic means those materials are already there. Those who want to go on will add their own unique outlook bit by bit to the borrowed universe, until they're ready to create their own universes and work—as I did.

It's really wonderful to read such a solid, comprehensive article on a subject—and its fans—that has been snubbed for so long and is so important to those who enjoy it. It's even better to read a view that is so refreshingly open-minded!—Tamora Pierce, YA Author, New York City.