



Petros Panaou

## Why I Read and Write Literature for Youth

In my science fiction novel, **Operation LOGOS: The Cell Phone Mystery** (2022), the protagonist accidentally discovers a curious cell phone hidden inside a book at his favorite public library. Along the way, he realizes this “phone” contains enormous power as it is an “articulation- control device.”

People, communities, and societies are made of language, of words. Almost every aspect of ourselves relies on language. For the most part, we are made out of words we call stories. It is through stories that we perceive ourselves, others, and the world.

Our identity, our worldviews, our attitudes toward others, all of these are based on stories, or “narratives,” as communication experts often call them. This is why when we want to change ourselves, others, or the world, we must first change our words and stories. Words have the power for immeasurable good or infernal evil. This is what the main character of **Operation LOGOS** finds out when he uses the strange phone to literally put words in other people’s mouths.

In the sequel, which was published in Greece and Cyprus in January 2024 and is titled **Operation ANTI-LOGOS: The Cell Phone Mystery 2**, the protagonist discovers the power of the written word in relation to memory, whether it be individual or collective, and the impact that memory can have on our lives. All of the above are important reasons for someone like me to be a reader and a writer of words and stories. This is the reason why I intentionally read and write stories for children and youth.

Young people are more open to the new and the unknown. They want to explore everything, and they are not caught up in stereotypical ideas about the world. Reading and writing literature for children and young adults is an endless game, an adventure. A book that imagines young readers, imagines readers who are not yet trapped in fixed views and expectations of what a book can be or do. Therefore, children’s and young adult literature has a clear look at horizons that are wide open to personal and social change and possibility.

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*Every possible use of words should be made available to every single person [...] Not because everyone should be an artist but because no one should be a slave.*

— Gianni Rodari, *The Grammar of Fantasy*

