

**IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award 2018**, remarks by Shin-ichi Kawarada, The Asahi Shimbun, 30 August 2018, Athens, Greece

Kalimera sas.

I am so glad to join the IBBY international congress in Athens and it is an honor for me to meet everyone at the ceremony of IBBY-Asahi reading promotion award today.

I am a chief of the Rome bureau of the Japanese daily newspaper The Asahi Shimbun and I am in charge of the Mediterranean countries including Greece. For your information, the Asahi Shimbun is one of the leading daily broadsheet written in Japanese and we deliver about six million copies to families in Japan every morning. I am a correspondent in Rome and I write articles every day to send to Japan covering every topic, not only politics and economics but also culture and fine arts.

However, I'm not good at writing even now. I am very curious to see the parts of the world I've never seen. Especially in my childhood, I loved to daydream and spend time in a fictional world as if I were a character in a story.

Books transported me to different worlds. I am so grateful to my parents for giving me a lot of illustrated and classic children's books that every child should read.

I present here some books which are so memorable to me and that I can't forget to this day. One is a Japanese illustrated book "Nenaiko dareda", it means "Who wouldn't sleep?" , which my mother often read to me when I was two or three years old. In this illustrated book, it is said that midnight is inhabited not by thieves and mice but ghosts, and if a child would not sleep at midnight, the ghosts would turn the child into one of them and carry him away to the ghost's world. I can't erase the picture of the book from my mind, in which a white ghost made of torn paper was set against a black paper background. Though I was scared every time my mother read it to me, I often asked her to read it to me again and again from under the covers of my bed, where I took refuge.

Then a German children's book "Der rauber Hotzenplotz" written by Otfried Pleussler was one of the most absorbing books I read when I was an elementary school student. It provided a chance to get to know a foreign culture for the first time. In the story, I learned about many things that I had never seen, for example a witch, a tobacco snuff and a coffee grinder. Looking at pretty illustrations, I imagined the color, form and smell of these things that existed in a completely different culture.

The next book I read "Momo" , is one of the masterpieces that is read all over the world, it has deepened and broadened my imaginative world through recognizing and thinking of abstract concepts such as "time" and "happiness".

Today, I think the imagination I cultivated by reading books is very useful for my work as a

journalist. Actually, in journalism, I have to describe events that happen as they are, and I have to tackle social problems and issues of the real world. I don't use my imagination to do these things. But, I think it is so important to use imagination for researching the background of the topic I'm writing about.

If it were only a case of reporting when and where something happened, then an Artificial Intelligence could do it, but I believe that the significance of having news reported by journalists is the attitude to seek the truth joined with the ability to imagine and think independently.

Children's books equip them with a lot of tools to make it in society. In books, children would be chased by dinosaurs, they would grieve the separation from friends, and they would fight for and demand peace. I think it's not too much to say that these experiences empower them to forge a path in their future lives.

Today, all the groups nominated to IBBY-Asahi reading promotion award are continuing the efforts to show a new world to children. I would like to express my great respect for your activity. I hope that through your group's activities, more children will learn to be considerate to other people, be flexible enough to accept other cultures and love peace.

I would like to finish by thanking you for your attention. Efcharisto sas.