

# EQ209-15 Children's Literature in Childhood

21/22

**Department**

Education Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Juliet Raynsford

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module explores the psycho/social potential and function of children's literature in the developing life of the child. It will encourage you to interrogate the theoretical premises, concepts and debates appropriate, and appropriated to, the psycho/social function of children's literature in childhood. You will gain knowledge and understanding of the child's processes of psycho/social and cognitive engagement with literary texts, and develop a comprehensive knowledge of a range of key picture books and children's novel as well as fiction produced for young adults.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

This module will contribute the following aims to the wider aims of the degree course

To explore and identify, through the study of key texts texts, the psycho/social potential and function of children's literature in the developing life of the child.

To interrogate the theoretical premises, concepts and debates appropriate, and appropriated to, the psycho/social function of children's literature in childhood.

To have a knowledge and understanding of the child's processes of psycho/social and cognitive

engagement with literary texts.

To have a comprehensive knowledge of a range of picture books and children's novels appropriate to the module's purposes and focus.

To develop research, analysis and ICT skills congruent with the wider degree and appropriate to the discipline and learning outcomes.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

This module will explore models, concepts and themes relating to the role children's literature plays in children's psycho/social development. It will consider children's literature produced for children and young people of all ages, with opportunities built into the module for students to consider picture books produced for very young children as well as fiction produced for young adults.

The module is divided into five themes:

- “The meaning and importance of fairy tales”
- “The Thrill of the Frightening”
- “The Real Fictions of the unspeakable”
- “Social Issues and identity”
- “Changing Families”

In conjunction with considering theoretical perspectives on these areas, students will be encouraged to read children's books associated with these topics and to create presentations which highlight the psycho/social dimensions of particular texts. Alongside this students will be required to research and identify areas of dispute and debate regarding what constitutes 'credible' children's literature within these genres and subject areas. Specifically, this will involve the following teaching and learning experiences:

"The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales" Students will explore the concept of the 'Ur narrative' and in particular Bruno Bettelheim's (1976) suggestion that fairy tales are the first psycho/social narratives that children are exposed to. The significance of children learning to order experience will be debated, alongside consideration of the traditional fairy tale structure and format. Students will be encouraged to consider contemporary disputes and debates, drawn from fields such as feminism, postmodernism and post-colonialism, that explore how fairy tales are packaged and marketed to children at this stage of the 21st century. Students will be directed to a range of contrasting anthologies of Fairy Tales.

"The Thrill of the Frightening" Students will consider contrasting theoretical interpretations of the psycho/social benefits of children emotionally and imaginatively encountering elements of fear and the uncanny as a result of their literary choices. Different psychological theories on the significance of children and young adult readers exploring factors such as existing fears, auto-erotic fantasy, loss and unresolved psychological tension through engaging with literature will be explored. Here, students will debate the key questions: 'Why do some children enjoy stories about ghouls and ghosts?' and 'Why is the horror genre so popular with many young adolescents?' Students will be directed to a list of books, for varying ages, that explore scary themes.

"The 'Real' Fictions of the Unspeakable" During these weeks students will consider examples of literature that explore real-life scenarios. This will include texts that are set during the Holocaust, Nazi Germany and more recent wars and conflicts. Students will explore what ethical questions

texts set in these contexts encounter, in particular attention will be given to debating the question of whether it is ever acceptable to create a story set in a real-life setting that in reality would have been extremely unlikely to have had had the ending the author has suggested. Students will be asked to consider whether the texts they have chosen to read relating to this genre are empowering for children or whether they push the limits of childhood and children's fiction in to uncomfortable or unethical territories.

"Social Issues and Identities" During these sessions students will consider examples of children's literature that fall into the genre of 'social realism'. This will include considering the ongoing popularity of books such as those written by Jacqueline Wilson and David Walliams that explore issues relating to culture, gender, self-identity, vulnerability, social exclusion and themes connected to the break-down of the family, child neglect and abuse.

"Changing Families" These sessions will give students an opportunity to look at the changing nature of literature in relation to childhood over time. Starting with a review of some of the moral tales from the Victorian era through to the present day. The module will end with a look at how contemporary children's literature is depicting the modern family and the place of the child and childhood within it

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of a range of contrasting literary genres, literary structures and formats associated with children's literature.
- Apply underlying concepts and principles commonly associated with Children's Literature, and reflect on how key concepts and principles can be applied within educational and professional contexts.
- Develop understanding of a range of literary methods, analytic approaches and theoretical frameworks commonly applied to critically evaluate and deconstruct literary texts designed to engage children and young adults
- Develop an awareness of the limits of their knowledge of children's literature and through this identify areas of enquiry to achieve a fuller level of comprehension of the discipline.

## Indicative reading list

Androutsopoulou, A. (2001) "Fiction as an Aid to Therapy: A Narrative and Family Rationale for Practice", *Journal of Family Therapy* 23,3:278-95.

Batho, R. et al (eds)(1999) *War and Peace in Children's Books*, Leuven: University of Brighton

Beck, U.(1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage

Bettelheim, B.(1976) *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Knopf.

Bobby, S. R. Ed.(2009) *Fairy Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings*. Jefferson: McFarland.

Botelho, M .J. and Ridman M.K. Eds.(2009) *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature: Mirrors, Window and Doors*. New York: Routledge.

Bradford, C. et.al. Eds. (2008) *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Butts, D.(2011) *Children's Literature and Social Change*. London: Lutterworth.

Christensen, P.(2002) "Childhood and the Construction of the Vulnerable Body", in Prout, A.(ed),

The Body, Childhood and Society, London:Macmillan.

Christensen, P. and O'Brien, M. (eds) (2003) Children in the City: Home, Neighbourhood and Community.London:Routledge.

Colomer, T. Kummerling-Meibauaer, B. and Silva-Diaz, C. Eds. (2010) New Direction in Picturebook Research. NewYork:Routledge.

Crago, H. (1985) "The Place of Story in Affective Development: Implications for Education and Clinicians," in Curry, N.(ed.)The Feeling Child , NewYork:Haworth.

Crago,M.(2003)"What is a FairyTale?", Signal100,8-26.

Daniels, J. (1992) "Stories We Tell Ourselves: Stories We Tell Others," in Styles, M. Bearne, E and Watson, V.(eds) ExploringChildren'sLiterature, London:Cassell.

Edward, O. D. (2007) British Children's Fiction in the Second World War. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U P.

Fox, C. "What Do We Tell Our Children?" in Meek, M. (ed) Children's Literature and National Identity. Stoke onTrent:Trentham.

Gamble, N. and Tucker, N. (2001) Family Fictions: Contemporary Classics in Children's Literature, London: Continuum

Horne, J. and Sanders J. S. Eds.(2011) Frances Hodgson Burnett'sTheSecret Garden: A Children's Classic at 100. Lanham, Maryland: Children's Literature Association and Scarecrow Press Inc.

Jackie C. Horne (2011). History and the Construction of the Child in Early British Children's Literature. Farnham: Ashgate.

James, K. (2009) Death, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Adolescent Literature. New York: Routledge.

Lampart, J. (2010) Children's Fiction about 9/11:Ethnic, Heroic and National Identities. NewYork: Routledge.

Macedo, S.andYoung, R. M.(2003) Child, Family, State NewYork: NewYorkUniversityPress.

Mallan, K. and Bradford, C. Ed.(2011) Contemporary Children's Literature and Film. Engagingwith Theory .Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

McLeod, J. (1997) Narrative and Psychotherapy, London:Sage.

Müller, A. (2009) Framing Childhood in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals and Prints. 16891789. Farnham: Ashgate.

Nixon, C.L. (2011) The Orphanin Eighteenth-Century Law and Literature .Farnham:Ashgate.

op de Beeck, N. (2010) Suspended Animation: Children's Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity. Minneapolis: UniversityofMinnesotaPress.

Philips, A. (1998) The Beast in the Nursery, London: Faber and Faber.

Reynolds, K. (2005) Sociology, Politics, The Family: Children and Families in Anglo-American Children's Fiction 1920 – 1960," in Reynolds, K (ed) Modern Children's Literature, Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan,23-41.

Reynolds, K., Brennan, G. and McCarron, K. (2001) Frightening Fictions. London:Continuum.

Rudd, D. Ed.(2010) The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature. London:Routledge.

Rudnytsky, P. L. (ed), (1993) Transitional Objects and Potential Spaces: Literary Uses of D. W. Winnicott. NewYork: Columbia University press.

Sebag-Montefiore, S.(2009).Women Writers of Children's Classics. London: Northcote.

Segel, E. (1989) "Collaborations: Putting Children's Literature to Work for Children at Rist," in Gannon, S. R. and Thompson, R. A. (eds) When Rivers Meet, New York: Pace University Press, 2731.

Short, G. (1997) "Learning through Literature: Historical Fiction, Autobiography and the Holocaust,"Children's Literature in Education 28.4:179-90.

Storr, A(2001) Freud: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tatar, M. (1992) *Off with Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tucker, N and Reynolds, K. *Death in Children's Literature* (reference not accessible)

Warner, M. (1994) *From The Beast to the Blonde: On Fairytales and Their Tellers*, London: Chatto and Windus. Warner, M. (2000) *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock*, London: Vintage

Wilkie-Stibbs, C. (2011) 'Splitting the Difference: Pleasure, Desire, and Intersubjectivity in Children's Literature and Film'. In Mallan, K. et al. Eds. *Contemporary Children's Literature and Film. Engaging with Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Winnicott, D. W. (1982) *Playing and Reality*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge

Winnicott, D. W. (1991) *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*. London: Penguin

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

## Subject specific skills

- the underlying values, theories and concepts relevant to education
- the diversity of learners and the complexities of the education process
- constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of education.
- reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, health, historical and philosophical perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of babies and young children and childhood
- apply multiple perspectives to early childhood issues, recognising that early childhood studies involves a range of research methods, theories, evidence and applications
- integrate ideas and findings across the multiple perspectives in early childhood studies and recognise distinctive early childhood studies approaches to relevant issues
- evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies and young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture
- constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development
- critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies in regard to babies, young children and childhood
- - demonstrate a critical understanding of the interrelationships between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts in the lives of children and their families and communities
- recognise and challenge inequalities in society, and embrace an anti-bias approach

## Transferable skills

- Active listening
- Analysis and decision making
- Application of numeracy
- Attitudes and aptitudes for work
- Character/personality
- Cognitive flexibility
- Common sense
- Communication skills
- Complex problem solving

- Confidence
  - Coordinating with others
  - Creativity
  - Critical thinking
  - Emotional intelligence
  - Initiative and also follow instructions
  - Intellectual ability
  - International cultural awareness
  - Interpersonal and communication
  - Judgement and decision making
  - Knowledge of chosen job/career
  - Literacy
  - Management of learning
    - Motivation, tenacity, commitment
  - Negotiation
  - Passion
  - Personal development skills
  - Persuading/influencing
  - Planning and organisational skills
  - Reasoning
  - Self-management/resilience
  - Team working
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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	10 sessions of 1 hour (7%)
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (13%)
Private study	120 hours (80%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

Independent study hours include background reading, completing reading/other tasks in preparation for timetabled teaching sessions, undertaking research using the library resources, follow-up reading work, working on individual and group projects, the completion of formative and summative assignments, revision.

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
Assessed Essay A 3,000-word essay.	100%	30 hours

### Feedback on assessment

Written feedback on assignments. Tutorials.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of UPSA-C804 Undergraduate Psychology with Education Studies

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UEQA-X35B Undergraduate Education Studies