

Asst. Professor Katherine Wakely-Mulroney
kmulroney@ntu.edu.sg

Fridays, 13:30-16:20

Location: HSS Seminar Room 6

HL4039 S2 AY2026-2027

Advanced Studies in Children's Literature



DESCRIPTION

Books for young readers are often conceived of in terms of their straightforwardness. Focussing on children's literature from the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, this course locates that which is experimental, ideologically complex, and formally intricate in apparently simple texts. Exploring a diverse range of primary sources, students will consider the role children's literature has played in the development of modern childhood as an aesthetic, social, and commercial construct. We will also examine the intersection between children's literature and fields such as book history and religious studies. Identifying a series of critical concepts essential to the conceptualisation and production of early children's literature (among them easiness, gradation, and abridgement), students will consider how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers sought to convey challenging themes to young audiences as comprehensibly, appealingly, and at times intensively as possible. How is the threat of child mortality treated in the *New England Primer's* rhyming alphabet (1727) and Christina Rossetti's verse parable *Goblin Market* (1862)? How do Isaac Watts and George MacDonald respond differently to the challenge of introducing young readers to Christian theology? What taxonomic comparisons might we locate between John Newbery's eighteenth-century compendia and Victorian children's periodicals?

REQUIRED TEXTS

- ▶ Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807)
- ▶ Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies* (1863)
- ▶ George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872)

NOTE: All other readings will be posted on NTULearn or are available via Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, Nineteenth-Century Collections Online, or HathiTrust Digital Library.

ASSESSMENTS

Participation: 15%
Presentation: 10%
Term Paper: 25%
Final Exam: 50%

Please see the Assessments Handout on NTULearn for further details concerning the assessments.

DEADLINES, LATE PENALTIES, AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please review the Assessments Handout on NTULearn, which includes information concerning the deadlines and expectations for each assignment. Please refer to the Assessments Handout for the course policy on the use of AI tools.

SCHEDULE

1. AUGUST 14TH - INTRODUCTION

- ▶ The *New-England Primer* (1727)

2. AUGUST 21ST - EASINESS

- ▶ Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs* (1715)
- ▶ Isaac Watts, "A Serious Address to Children and Youth, relating to the great and necessary Duty of Prayer" *Prayers Composed for the Use and Imitation of Children* (1728)

3. AUGUST 28TH - COMPENDIOUSNESS

- ▶ Thomas Boreman, *A Description of 300 Animals* (1730)
- ▶ John Newbery, *Nurse Truelove's New Year's Gift* (1786); *Tom Thumb's Folio* (1791)

4. SEPTEMBER 4TH - STUDENTS' UNION DAY (NO CLASS)

5. SEPTEMBER 11TH - GRADATION

- ▶ Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children* (1787-1788)

6. SEPTEMBER 18TH - ABRIDGEMENT

- ▶ Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807)

7. SEPTEMBER 25TH - HETEROGENEITY I

- ▶ Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies* (1863)

RECESS WEEK

8. OCTOBER 9TH - HETEROGENEITY: II

- ▶ Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies* (1863)

9. OCTOBER 16TH - GROUP PRESENTATIONS

- ▶ *Aunt Judy's Magazine* (1867-1868)

10. OCTOBER 23RD - METRE AND MEANING

- ▶ Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market* (1862)

11. OCTOBER 30TH - DARKNESS AND LIGHT

- ▶ George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872)

12. NOVEMBER 6TH - ESSAY WRITING WEEK

No assigned readings

13. NOVEMBER 13TH - FORM AND ADDRESS

- ▶ George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872)

RECOMMENDED SECONDARY READINGS

Avery, Gillian and Kimberley Reynolds, eds. *Representations of Childhood Death*. Macmillan Press, 2000.

Bottoms, Janet. "'To read aright': Representations of Shakespeare for Children", *Children's Literature* 32 (2004): 1-14.

Brown, Gillian. "The Metamorphic Book: Children's Print Culture in the Eighteenth Century", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39.3 (2006): 351-362.

Crain, Patricia. *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from The New England Primer to The Scarlet Letter*. Stanford UP, 2000.

- Demers, Patricia. *Heaven Upon Earth: The Form of Moral and Religious Children's Literature*. University of Tennessee, 1993. Grenby, M. O., *The Child Reader, 1700-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Gruber, Garvey. "Scissorizing and Scrapbooks: Nineteenth-Century Reading, Remaking, and Recirculating" in Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (eds), *New Media 1740-1915*. MIT Press, 2003. 207-228.
- Gubar, Marah. *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- Hall, Donald E., ed. *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*. Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Hamlin, Christopher. "Charles Kingsley: From Being Green to Green Being", *Victorian Studies* 54.2 (2012): 255-281.
- Humphries, Simon. "The Uncertainty of *Goblin Market*", *Victorian Poetry* 45.4 (2007): 391-413.
- James, Felicity. "'Wild Tales' from Shakespeare: Readings of Charles and Mary Lamb", *Shakespeare* 2.2 (2006): 152-167.
- Lang, Marjory. "Childhood's Champions: Mid-Victorian Children's Periodicals and the Critics", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 13.1/2 (1980): 17-31.
- Lim, Jessica and Louise Joy. *Women's Literary Education, 1690-1850*. Edinburgh UP, 2023.
- MacDonald, George. "The Fantastic Imagination", 1893. (Posted on NTULearn)
- Mendoza, Victor Roman. "'Come Buy': The Crossing of Sexual and Consumer Desire in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*", *ELH* 73.4 (2006): 913-947.
- McGillis, Roderick. "'A Fairytale Is Just a Fairytale': George MacDonald and the Queering of Fairy", *Marvels & Tales* 17.1 (2003): 86-99.
- Michals, Teresa. *Books for Children, Books for Adults: Age and the Novel from Defoe to James*. Cambridge UP, 2014.
- New, Elisa. "'Both Great and Small': Adult Proportion and Divine Scale in Edward Taylor's 'Preface' and 'The New-England Primer'", *Early American Literature* 28.2 (1993): 120-132.
- Nelson, Claudia. *Precocious Children and Childish Adults*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2012.
- O'Malley, Andrew, ed. *Literary Cultures and Eighteenth-Century Childhoods*. Routledge, 2018.
- O'Malley, Andrew. *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century*. Routledge, 2003.
- Paul, Lissa. *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the Long Eighteenth Century*. Routledge, 2011.
- Richardson, Alan. *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice 1780-1832*. Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Ruwe, Donelle. "Barbault and the Body Part Game: Maternal Pedagogy in the Long Eighteenth Century" in Lisa Rowe Fraustino and Karen Coats (eds), *Mothers in Children's and Young Adult Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to Postfeminism* (University Press of Mississippi, 2016).
- Ruwe, Donelle. *British Children's Poetry in the Romantic Era: Verse, Riddle, and Rhyme*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Straley, Jessica. *Evolution and Imagination in Victorian Children's Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2016.
- Talairach-Vielmas, Laurance. *Fairy Tales, Natural History and Victorian Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Wakely-Mulroney, Katherine. "Isaac Watts and the Dimensions of Child Interiority." *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39.1 (2016): 121-139.
- Wakely-Mulroney, Katherine. "Nuts, Flies, Thimbles, and Thumbs: Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature and Scale." *Small Things in the Eighteenth Century: The Political and Personal Value of the Miniature*. Eds. Chloe Wigston Smith and Beth Fowkes Tobin. Cambridge University Press, 2022. 31-46.
- Wakely-Mulroney, Katherine. "Riddling the Catechism in Early Children's Literature." *The Review of English Studies* 70.294 (2019): 272-290.
- Wharton, Joanna. "Inscribing on the Mind: Anna Letitia Barbault's 'Sensible Objects', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35.4 (2012): 535-550.
- Wood, Naomi. "A (Sea) Green Victorian: Charles Kingsley and *The Water-Babies*", *The Lion and the Unicorn* 19.2 (1995): 233-252.