

The Golden Age of Children's Literature

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LIT 4334, Fall 2015
T 8-9; R 9
Section 03H6

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Course Description

The “Golden Age” of Children’s Literature (1865–1926) was a formative period for children’s literature in America and Britain. Peter Pan, Alice, Dorothy, and Tom Sawyer all hail from the Golden Age, and their adventures have become ingrained in our cultural imagination. This course examines representations of the child and childhood in popular Golden Age texts, as well as the literary construction of characteristics now commonly associated with childhood, such as innocence, imagination, playfulness, and sentimentality. Through analysis of primary texts and literary criticism, as well as archival research in UF’s Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature, we will think through questions regarding the literary, historical, cultural, and political work of the Golden Age. For instance: How do Golden Age texts bolster or challenge the Romantic concept of the “child of nature”? How do they interact with the cultural, industrial, and political shifts of the Victorian and Progressive eras? How do they work through complex ideas such as subjectivity, agency, oppression, and empowerment? How did they continue to influence conceptions about childhood beyond the parameters of the Golden Age? This is a seminar style course, so make sure you have the reading materials with you in class and are prepared to discuss the texts at length as well as write about them.

Required Texts

You must have a physical copy of all readings in class with you. Note that for the Alice books, you are required to have the Third Norton Critical Edition (ISBN: 0393932346). For all other course texts, you may purchase any edition. All texts are available at the UF bookstore, and most are available through online retailers such as Amazon.com.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* (1865, 1871)

*both texts in the Third Norton Critical Edition, titled *Alice in Wonderland*

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

Susan Coolidge, *What Katy Did* (1873)

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876)

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (1883)

Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Books* (1894)

E. Nesbit, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899)

L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900)

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *A Little Princess* (1905)

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911)

J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* (1911)

Eleanor H. Porter, *Pollyanna* (1913)

In addition to the primary course texts, we will read critical essays from academic journals and books, and selections from digitized texts in the Baldwin collection. These are listed below:

Literary Criticism

The Alice criticism is in the Third Norton Critical Edition of *Alice in Wonderland*. **All other critical essays, book chapters, and sources from the Baldwin's digital collection can be accessed through the Library's course reserves system (ARES).** You must bring a copy of the readings to class. Here is a list of the full titles of the essays/chapters and their sources:

- Gubar, Marah. "Introduction: 'Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast.'" In *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (2009).
- . "Collaborating with the Enemy: *Treasure Island* as Anti-Adventure Story." Also in *Artful Dodgers*.
- . "Risky Business: Talking about Children's in Children's Literature Criticism." In *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (2013).
- Sanders, Joe Sutliff. "Spinning Sympathy: Orphan Girl Novels and the Sentimental Tradition." In *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (2008).
- Brown, Gillian. "Child's Play." In *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* (1999).
- McBratney, John. "Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space in Kipling's 'Jungle Book.'" In *Victorian Studies* (1992).
- Reimer, Mavis. "Ch. 7 Making Princesses, Re-making *A Little Princess*." In *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context* (2000).
- Holt, Jenny. "'Normal' versus 'Deviant' Play in Children's Literature: An Historical Overview." In *The Lion and the Unicorn* (2010).
- Foster, Shirley and Judy Simons. "Ch. 8 Frances Hodgson Burnett." In *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls* (1995).
- Rose, Jacqueline. "Introduction." In *The Case of Peter Pan Or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984).
- Karlin, Dorothy. "When Pollyanna Did Not Grow Up: Girlhood and the Innocent Nation." In *Pollyanna: A Children's Classic at 100* (2014).

Baldwin Digital Collection

You do not have to bring copies of these readings to class, but you are responsible for reading the required excerpts and being prepared to discuss them in class.

Watts, Isaac. *Divine Songs* (preface)

Ames, Mary Francis. *An ABC for Baby Patriots* (1899)

Bellew, Frank. *A Bad Boy's First Reader* (excerpt, 31-44)

Attendance Policy

Since this course is discussion-based, attendance is mandatory. Attendance includes arriving to class on time and having all of the required materials with you for the day's discussion. Habitual lateness or failure to have the readings with you in class will count as absences. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences with no grade penalty, although you are responsible for knowing the materials covered on the days you miss. Each unexcused absence beyond 3 will reduce your course grade by half a letter grade.

Assignments

Discussion Papers (10): 20%
Exploratory Essay: 25%
Intertextual Essay: 25%
Writing Reflections: see below
Archival Alice Project: 30%

Below are descriptions of the assignments you will complete for the course. We will discuss them further in class as each deadline approaches. I will be happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss essay ideas and look at early drafts.

Discussion Papers:

Throughout the semester, you will write ten short papers (1-2 pages, single-spaced) that respond to the week's reading. These do not have to put forward perfectly formulated arguments, but each paper should be focused on drawing out some larger issue that can be discussed in class. For instance, you might do a close reading of a passage (or illustration) to think through how the text works with concepts of innocence, imagination, socialization, gender expectations, etc. You might choose a specific character to analyze, for the same purpose. You might go the intertextual route and describe how scenes from the current text illuminate aspects of a text we read earlier in the semester.

In other words, the focus of each paper is up to you, but each one must contain quotes and details from the text and an analysis of those details. Your goal should not be to make any grand conclusions, but to come to a more nuanced understanding of aspects of the text that you find interesting and would like to discuss further. You may turn in discussion papers on any day we have class, but they must be given to me at the beginning of class, and they must pertain to the texts we are discussing that day.

Exploratory Essay, 4-5 pages, double-spaced:

The primary texts and criticism we'll read in the first few weeks of class work with several key issues of the Golden Age, such as Romantic primitivism, power, agency, acculturation, didacticism, sentimentality, and innocence. In this essay, you will think about what issues you have been drawn to investigating thus far, and why. What scenes in the texts do you find yourself underlining or bringing up in class? What have you written about in discussion papers? What particular issue or aspect of the texts do you find yourself thinking about the most? You can focus on a cultural issue (power, gender conventions, socialization, etc.), an aesthetic one (word play, whimsicality, humor, illustration, etc.), or a combination of both (how humor reveals or challenges power structures, how illustrations convey gender conventions, etc.).

This is an exploratory paper, and it should do the following things: 1) identify and explain the key idea (you may look to outside sources for this), 2) note an example or two from the texts we've read so far, 3) think about why you are drawn to this key idea. It is fine if you do not come to a definite conclusion, but make an earnest attempt to reflect. Have you always been interested in this idea, and if so, why do you

think that is? Is it a new idea that you find compelling, and if so, why now? Does the idea connect to other classes, books, films, or current events that interest you? The goal of this essay is to become more conscious of your cultural and literary interests, as well as to think about how aspects of your educational, cultural, and/or personal background might have shaped these interests. This will help identify avenues for future papers, and foster more meaningful reading in general.

Intertextual Essay, 5-6 pages, double-spaced:

“Intertextuality” is the relationship between literary texts, or as Jerry Griswold puts it, “that kind of ‘conversation’ which happens between authors and books.” As Griswold also notes, and as you will no doubt realize, there are many such ‘conversations’ occurring between Golden Age children’s literature texts that continuously work with similar tropes and conventions. In this essay, you will put two of the course texts in dialogue with one another, and think about how their conversation illuminates significant issues pertaining to the texts or to the cultural work of Golden Age children’s literature. For example, how are Alice’s “Adventures” in Wonderland similar to and different from Tom’s “Adventures” in Missouri? What do these differences imply about fantastical and ‘realistic’ settings, British and American culture, girls and boys? You will draw from at least two outside sources to support and nuance your analysis. These sources can be scholarship or Baldwin materials we’ve read for class.

Writing Reflections:

As you turn in your first two essays, you will participate in individual, guided exercises that will ask you to critically reflect upon your writing process and set specific goals for future assignments. These written exercises are meant to increase your awareness of your own writing process, tendencies, and strategies for improvement. They will also give me more specific points to address in my feedback to you. Writing reflections will take place during class on the day each essay is due. You will need to complete the written reflection to receive full credit on the essay.

Archival Alice Essay, 7-10 pages, double-spaced:

For your final project, we will return to the course’s first texts: Carroll’s Alice stories. You’ll choose a particular edition of *Alice* housed in the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature, analyze the unique features of your chosen edition, and explain how these features illuminate aspects of Carroll’s text, the literary or cultural conventions of the Golden Age, or the Golden Age’s influence on vastly different cultural or artistic contexts. Basically, you will use your knowledge of the Golden Age of children’s literature to examine the particularities of an archived text.

The Baldwin’s collection of Alice editions is extensive, and thus it speaks to a plethora of literary, historical, artistic, and cultural issues. What issues you choose to focus on are up to you. For example, you might choose to analyze a Victorian era edition with a written inscription that provides insight into how the text was presented to real children during that period. You might gravitate toward *Alice’s Adventures Underground*—a facsimile of Carroll’s handwritten manuscript, including his own illustrations that differ quite markedly from Tenniel’s. Salvador Dali’s 1969 illustrated edition is

certainly fascinating, as are the connections one could explore between the twentieth-century artistic/political movement of surrealism and the imaginativeness of Carroll's Victorian text.

You will have a chance to look at the Baldwin's extensive Alice holdings when we visit the archive at the beginning of the semester, but it is your responsibility to return to the Baldwin throughout the semester to choose your edition and analyze its contents. To ensure timely completion of the essay, you will turn in two pre-writing assignments: 1) a **proposal** that indicates your chosen edition as well as a few avenues of research that the edition's unique features prompt you to examine further. 2) a draft of your "**pivotal paragraph**"—a paragraph that transitions from an explanation of your archival text to literary analysis by expressing what research question(s) your archival Alice edition provokes. We will talk about this essay much further as the course progresses. You are also very much encouraged to ask questions and discuss your project with me frequently and at any point during the researching and writing process.

Grading

Here is an explanation of the letter grades I'll use to evaluate your essays: 'A' essays present complex, original arguments supported by compelling textual evidence and thought-provoking considerations of the 'so what' question, e.g. what the analysis reveals about the language, images, themes, or ideologies of the text(s). 'B+' essays present complex, original and well-supported analyses, but need more follow through regarding the 'so what' question. 'B' essays are competent in their presentation of ideas and textual evidence but the arguments require further development or nuance. Lower grades indicate a lack of organization, clarity, and/or textual evidence. I encourage you to see me in office hours or make an appointment if you are concerned about your essay grades and would like to discuss strategies to improve.

Reading Schedule

Readings and due dates are subject to change during the course of the semester. **Readings are due the day they are listed on the syllabus.**

Week 1

Tues. 8/25 – Course introductions

Thurs. 8/27 – Gubar, "Introduction"

Week 2

Tues. 9/1 – *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; Baldwin Digital: preface to Watts' *Divine Songs* (1851 edition)

Thurs. 9/3 – Auerbach, "A Curious Child"; Kincaid, "The Wonder Child" (all in Norton third edition)

Week 3

Tues. 9/8 – *Alice Through the Looking Glass*

Thurs. 9/10 – Gubar, “Reciprocal Aggression”; Polhemus, “Lewis Carroll and the Child” (all in Norton third edition)

Week 4

Tues. 9/15 – *What Katy Did*; **Class meets in the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature**

Thurs. 9/17 – Sanders, “Spinning Sympathy”

Week 5

Tues. 9/22 – *The Princess and the Goblin*

Thurs. 9/24 – **Essay 1 due**; in-class Writing Reflection

Week 6

Tues. 9/29 – *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Thurs. 10/1 – Brown, “Child’s Play”; Baldwin Digital: Bellew, “Bad Boy’s First Reader” (31-44)

Week 7

Tues. 10/6 – *Treasure Island*

Thurs. 10/8 – Gubar, “Collaborating with the Enemy: *Treasure Island* as Anti-Adventure Story”

Week 8

Tues. 10/13 – *The Jungle Book* and “The Undertakers”

Thurs. 10/15 – McBratney, “Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space”; Baldwin Digital: Ames, “An ABC for Baby Patriots”

Week 9

Tues. 10/20 – *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*

Thurs. 10/22 – Holt, “Normal Versus Deviant Play” Reimer, “Ch. 7 Making Princesses”

Week 10

Tues. 10/27 – *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Thurs. 10/29 – **Essay 2 due**; in-class Writing Reflection

Week 11

Tues. 11/3 – *A Little Princess*

Thurs. 11/5 – Reimer, “Ch. 7 Making Princesses”

Week 12

Tues. 11/10 – *The Secret Garden*

Thurs. 11/12 – Foster and Simons, “Ch. 8 Frances Hodgson Burnett”; **Proposal due**

Week 13

Tues. 11/17 – *Peter and Wendy*

Thurs. 11/19 – Rose, “Introduction”; Gubar, “Risky Business”

Week 14

Tues. 11/24 – **Pivotal paragraphs workshop**

Thurs. 11/26 – Thanksgiving

Week 15

Tues. 12/1 – *Pollyanna*; Karlin, “When Pollyanna Did Not Grow Up”

Thurs. 12/3 – **Presentations of pivotal paragraphs**

Week 16

Tues. 12/8 – **Presentation of pivotal paragraphs**

Final paper due: Fri. 12/11 by 12pm