Advanced Studies in
Children’s Literature
Description

Books for young readers are often conceived of in terms of their straightforwardness. Focusing 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 conceptualization and production of early children’s literature (among them easiness, gradation, and abridgment), students will consider how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers have 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 compendiums and Victorian children’s periodicals? This course will also develop students’ skills in using archival databases such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, Nineteenth-Century Collections Online, and HathiTrust Digital Library.

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%

Deadlines and Late Penalties

Class presentations will take place on **Thursday, April 2nd**, and the Term Paper is due on **Thursday, April 16th**. For the latter, please submit a hard copy of your work at the beginning of class, and a soft copy via Turnitin (uploaded no later than 9:30 on the due date). Late work will be penalized one-half mark per day late (an A paper submitted one day late would drop to an A-, etc.) and will not receive written feedback. Late work will only be accepted within 48 hours of the deadline.

Schedule

1. **January 16th - Introduction**
   - The *New-England Primer* (1727)

2. **January 23rd - 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. January 30\textsuperscript{th} - Compendiousness
   • Thomas Boreman, \textit{A Description of 300 Animals} (1730)
   • John Newbery, \textit{Nurse Truelove’s New Year’s Gift} (1786); \textit{Tom Thumb’s Folio} (1791)

4. February 6\textsuperscript{th} - Gradation
   • Anna Letitia Barbauld, \textit{Lessons for Children} (1787-1788)

5. February 13\textsuperscript{th} - Conversations
   • Anna Letitia Barbauld and John Aikin, \textit{Evenings at Home} (1792-1796)
   • Charlotte Smith, \textit{Conversations Introducing Poetry} (1804)

6. February 20\textsuperscript{th} - Abridgment
   • Charles and Mary Lamb, \textit{Tales from Shakespeare} (1807)

7. February 27\textsuperscript{th} - Heterogeneity: Content
   • Charles Kingsley, \textit{The Water-Babies} (1863)

8. March 12\textsuperscript{th} - Heterogeneity: Form
   • Charles Kingsley, \textit{The Water-Babies} (1863)

9. March 19\textsuperscript{th} - Metre and Meaning
   • Christina Rossetti, \textit{Goblin Market} (1862)

10. March 26\textsuperscript{th} - Miscellaneousness
    • \textit{Aunt Judy’s Magazine}

11. April 2\textsuperscript{nd} - Group Presentations

12. April 9\textsuperscript{th} - Darkness and Light
    • George MacDonald, \textit{The Princess and the Goblin} (1872)

13. April 16\textsuperscript{th} - Form and Address
    • George MacDonald, \textit{The Princess and the Goblin} (1872)

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**RECOMMENDED SECONDARY READINGS**


MacDonald, George. “The Fantastic Imagination”, 1893. (*Posted on NTULearn*)


