



Critical Approaches to Children's Literature

The course focuses on representations of childhood in texts, and examines what is meant by the contested term 'children's literature'. Participants will engage with some of the key debates in the field and consider a range of theoretical perspectives – from Romanticism to reader-response theory; from gender to postmodernism; from historical studies and sociocultural viewpoints to semiotics – in addition to examining critically the views of young readers and their reading choices.

As well as considering the 'classics', the genres studied on this route include picturebooks, poetry, media texts and a wide range of fiction, including international literature and novels for young adults. Close textual study and the history of children's literature are embedded within the course, as is reflection upon texts produced by ever-changing new technologies.

The course also offers an opportunity to conduct an empirical study of children making meaning of texts. Students are prepared for this research by examining a wide range of texts - novels, short stories, poetry, picturebooks, graphic novels, animation - and by studying the relationship between texts and readers from various perspectives, theoretical as well as empirical.

Aspects covered in this course include:

- exploring participants' memories of childhood reading
- debates about what is children's literature
- international classic fiction and modern fiction, film, poetry, picturebooks, comics, graphic novels and digital literature
- historical perspectives on literature written for children
- adaptations - how literary narratives are transformed into film versions
- consideration of the way childhood is represented in fiction, poetry, and multimodal texts
- considerations of how young readers engage with various types of texts
- issues of identity, authority, power, place, canonicity, play and subversion in children's literature

[Some of our Library's Children's Literature publications.](#)